CAMP KEN-JOCKETY

By

ETHEL HUME BENNETT

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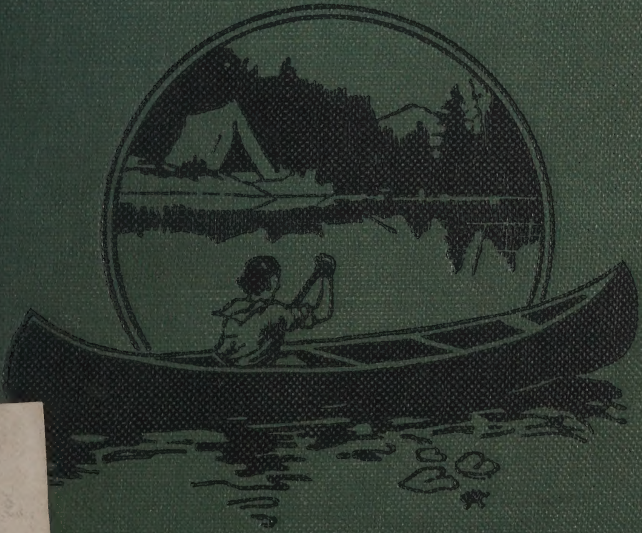
CAMP KEN-JOCKETY



By

ETHEL HUME BENNETT

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CAMP KEN-JOCKETY

"SSSH — LET HIM ALONE — DON'T MOVE AN EYELID"

(*page* 75)

Camp Ken-jockety

BY

ETHEL HUME BENNETT

Author of "Judy of York Hill"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

Boston and New York
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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1923

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TO

MY MOTHER

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CAMP KEN-JOCKETY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCES THE HEROINE

"Mrs. Ashton will be disappointed if you don't come, Jerry. She considers you one of her lions for to-night," said a clear voice at the door, and Colonel Hamilton, looking up from his letters, saw his cousin obviously ready to leave.

"Then I must certainly go and roar gently," said the Colonel, smiling. "Old friends like Mrs. Ashton must not be disappointed, but I have important things to attend to first of all. I'll join you a little later. Shall I ring for Hodgins?"

"No, thank you. He was to be here at a quarter to nine. Joy is bringing me my fan. You won't change your mind about Joy, Jerry?"

And then, as the Colonel shook his head and was about to speak, she continued with a sudden irritation:

"I don't know what else you want for her, I'm sure. She can have good sea air, and bathing, and golf, if she wants it — though I must say the child is strangely indifferent about playing! But then almost anything seems to bore her. We are within reach of town, at all events, and the Turners will be there. This Canadian camp — what's its name? — Ken-jockety? — sounds absolutely uncivilized! Oh, I know, 'back to nature,' 'the simple life,' and all that sort of thing; but Joyce isn't used to roughing it. She'll hate it, and she'll be furious if this Mrs. Davidson tries to manage her. And perhaps you'll find out, Jerry Hamilton, that it isn't as easy to deal with young people as it used to be. Now, Joyce — but you'll see for yourself."

"What will he see?" cried a gay young voice as a girl came quickly into the library. "Your new opera cloak? Um-um! Fanchot turned you out pretty well this time, Cousin Edith. Her lines *are* better than Marie's; the black velvet is just right — yes — I *do* like the jade lining: you might tell her to make me a frock that shade next time you're down. I need a couple more, and I suppose I shall always have to wear green as long as there is a tint of bronze in my hair. We call it bronze, Daddy Jerry. Please take notice! Au revoir, Cousin Edith. Have you got a clean hanky? Don't forget to say you had a nice time."

Miss Hamilton shook her handsome head reprovingly at this pertness, glanced at her watch, reminded the Colonel again of his promise, and was gone.

Joyce threw herself into one of the big library chairs and yawned.

"I wish to goodness Chang wouldn't give us such ridiculously small cups of coffee: a thimbleful's no sort of a pick-me-up at all. Did you want me, Dad? I expect Piggy any minute."

"Of course, I want you, I always do," was the quick answer. "I especially want you this evening. Didn't I make that clear?"

Joyce opened her lovely gray eyes rather widely.

"Oh! I thought you just had something to say to me. Piggy 'phoned this afternoon and wanted me to race with him: he and Crook Johnston have a bet on — I don't know exactly about the race, but it'll be speedy all right. Piggy killed three hens and a little dog last night, but he didn't lose a second."

The Colonel took the chair opposite his daughter and said rather grimly.

"And who, may I ask, is Piggy?"

"Piggy? Oh, Piggy Turner. His mother and Cousin Edith are great pals; they play golf all day at the Bay, and bridge all night, and Piggy and I root around."

"Root?" said the Colonel. "Ah, yes! Piggy. I see. It must be a handicap to have a name like that." His eyes twinkled. "He roots, and hoots, too, I take it. When does he propose to descend upon us?"

"Any minute now," said Joyce. "I almost wish I'd said 'no' for to-night. I can't think why I'm so sleepy!"

"Then I will say 'no' for you. Travers" (this to the maid who was taking away the tray), "when Mr. Turner calls, please say that Miss Hamilton is unable to go out to-night."

"I think that 'unable' is rather neat," he commented, turning again to Joyce, "for since you had made a previous engagement with me —"

Joyce's eyebrows drew together in a quick frown — she seemed to be about to make some objection, then relaxed again and said indifferently:

"Oh, well! I'm sure I don't care. I *used* to be awfully keen on racing."

"Used to be?" said her father. "And what are you 'awfully keen on' now?"

Joyce repressed another yawn, not quite successfully.

"Awfully keen on now?" she repeated wonderingly. "It isn't Christmas, nor my birthday. Do you want to buy me a present to make up for going away again just as soon as you come home from France? No? Seriously? Well — well — I don't know — I was crazy about dancing last year, but it's a bore now. You might get me another mount if you really want to give me a present — of course, Bijou is pretty fair yet. I'd want a winner, and that would cost a lot. Don't bother — riding's rather a bore."

"I hadn't thought of it just that way," said her father thoughtfully. "But I have a gift for you — a gift that money could not buy — not any amount of money."

He sat absorbed in thought a moment or two, and then, to Joyce's disappointment, changed the subject.

"I'm sorry to have to go overseas again, honey, sorrier than you know, but those poor people will starve unless the railroads are put into some sort of shape, and as I've had the necessary experience and am free to go — that's all there is to it."

Joyce gave a sudden little cry of delight. She was sitting up straight now; there was a lovely rose color in her cheeks and her eyes were sparkling.

"Daddy Jerry!" she exclaimed. "I've had the loveliest idea! I know *now* what I'm awfully keen to do — why didn't I think of it before? Well, I *was* a silly."

She got up and shook her head reprovingly at her own reflection in the mirror beside the fireplace.

The Colonel looked at her tenderly. How beautiful the child had grown! But what was this she was saying?

"— big silly not to think before — of course, you can go with Daddy Jerry to Paris and stay with the Freers and the Ogdens and have a ripping time there until the old railroads are fixed."

She brushed a butterfly kiss on her father's forehead, and began to pirouette about the big library, sleepiness and fatigue banished as if by magic.

"What a good thing the Freers invited me before they went; I can week-end with the Ogdens at the sea. And the boulevards and the shops! Well, that's that. I can't imagine why I didn't think of it before. The very thought of Fisherman's Bay bored me to tears."

She was back in the big chair smiling confidently at her father. The answering smile in Colonel Hamilton's eyes was fond and proud, but his lips were set in the firm straight line which the men of his regiment could have told Joyce meant business.

"It sounds like a very nice plan except for one important detail," he said, rather slowly. "I shall not be in Paris all summer, and from what I know of the Freers I certainly should not wish you to spend the summer with them, nor yet with the Ogdens."

"They're really all right, Dad," said Joyce carelessly, as if contemplating no real opposition to her plan. "You've been away so long you can hardly know the family now; Jane Freer is at school with me, and Ted is quite passable."

"Is Jane a *friend* of yours?" he asked. "I mean a real pal? I don't seem to remember her name in your letters."

"Jane?" said Joyce vaguely. "Oh, no, not more than the others — she's a good sort, of course."

"Who is your special *friend?*" asked the Colonel, emphasizing the last word unmistakably.

"Well-ll," said Joyce slowly, "I don't know — I know heaps of people, of course — there's the crowd at school — and at the country club — and at the sea. Eve Hinkley will always run me about if Cousin Edith can't let me have a motor, and Piggy isn't a bad sort."

Joyce's tone was puzzled and a little bit annoyed.

"Just so," said her father. "And now to pleasanter themes. You don't seem to be curious about that gift I spoke of. You remember the Davidsons, of Toronto, of course. I used always to make a flying trip once a year to visit them, but I haven't seen them since Michael was killed at Vimy." His voice broke into a huskiness he could not quite control, and he paused a moment. "Some day, honey, you'll have a friend, please God, a real pal such as Michael was to me, one whom you trust and who would trust you, were the whole world against you —"

Joyce was on the arm of his big chair now, and she flung her arms impulsively around his neck.

"I was *so* sorry, Daddy," she said in a low voice. "I knew you would grieve."

"Grieve?" said the Colonel. "Yes, but there's joy too, much joy. 'Member Shakespeare's sonnet, Joyce — 'When, in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes'? No? Don't they give you Shakespeare to read at school nowadays?"

Joyce shook her head. ("Shakespeare?" she thought. "Oh, yes, the 'Merchant of Venice' man. How *quaint* of Daddy!")

"'Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee; and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate:
For thy sweet love rememb'red such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.' —

That's what thoughts of Michael bring me. 'Haply I think on thee.'"

Almost involuntarily Colonel Hamilton's hand went to an inner pocket and brought out a tiny folded morocco case. In it were three little pictures: one of a bride, exquisitely lovely in her veil and orange blossoms; one of a beautiful youth, a Sir Galahad he seemed, "*sans peur et sans reproche*"; and one of a tiny, curly-headed, white-frocked girl whose piquant grace gave promise of the beauty flowering now in the slim young thing bending over the photographs.

The Colonel placed them in a row along the sleeve of his dinner-jacket.

"I used to prop them that way, along the splints," he said. "They made everything worth while. 'Haply I think on thee' — too bad you don't know your Will Shakespeare, Joyce, we'll have to make his acquaintance together."

There was silence for a moment, and then the Colonel brought himself back with an effort to the business in hand.

"Michael's sister, Mrs. Davidson, spends her summers on an island at Wahnanee Bay, on the Georgian Bay; her husband, Graeme Davidson, is a professor at the University of Toronto, and there are four children: Drew, who is a fine upstanding lad with Michael's eyes; Christine, who must be about your age; Dicky and Peggy, who were engaging tots the last time I was there."

Joyce made as if to speak, but the Colonel went on: "Mrs. Davidson wrote — at least, telegraphed to me, when she knew I was returning to France, an invitation for you to spend the summer with them. I felt as if some one had made me heir to a gold mine when I got that bit of yellow paper. Gold mine! That's a tiny word. Joy, she's — she's a real Person. I envy you. She's made a home — the *real* article — I don't seem to be able to get away from that word 'real.' There isn't anything in the world I'd sooner do than pack a bag, take the night train for Toronto, and then go up with the Davidsons to Kenjockety. You don't know what fresh air *is*, honey, till you draw in big breaths of that water-washed, ozone-filled Georgian Bay air! And the canoeing, and the sailing, and the fishing!"

Joyce had slipped back to her own chair. She smiled, politely, at her father's enthusiasm.

"It sounds attractive," she said, "though I never could understand what people saw in living all hugger-mugger in a tent or camp, but I dare say it would be fun to go for a short time, if I were not going to Paris."

There was a hint of decision and firmness in the last words.

"It's a stroke of luck, oh, the very best and most glorious sort of luck, that you can go to Wahnanee, since you are not going to Paris."

There was no lack of decision in the Colonel's voice.

Joyce rose and faced her father.

"But I *don't want* to go to visit the Davidsons, and I *do want* to go to Paris."

"There are considerations that weigh more than 'don't want to,' my dear," said Colonel Hamilton. "I've thought the matter over very carefully; you can't be expected at sixteen to be as wise as your old Dad, who has been knocking about the world for years and years picking up all sorts of wisdom; the sort of life you would lead at Paris with the Freers, or at Boulogne with the Ogdens, or at Fisherman's Bay with Cousin Edith, isn't the best that I can give you, and I'm glad and grateful that I *can* offer you a 'best.'"

"You just refuse?" said Joyce, in amazement and anger drawing her brows together in a threatening line.

"Yes," said the Colonel. "I do — absolutely."

Joyce's eyes blazed; no one now would say they were gray eyes; there was a fury in them that made one think of flashes of fire; her beautiful face was distorted.

"I won't go!" she cried. "I *won't!* I *will* go to Paris — I'll —"

"Steady, steady," said the Colonel's voice. "Don't be childish, Joyce; surely you've conquered the tempers of nursery days."

The pain in his eyes and voice was unnoticed by Joyce.

"Childish!" she stormed. "Childish! You can command me if you like, but you're not going to treat me like one of your soldiers, even if you are my father. I don't want to go and I *won't!* How *dare* —"

"That's enough, Joyce," said her father in a voice she had never heard. "Go to your room. I shall speak to you later."

Surprised into obedience, Joyce turned and walked proudly out of the library without so much as looking at her father, but, as she crossed the hall, she was directly in front of a large old-fashioned mirror which hung opposite the library door, and there sat her father as if he were a couple of feet away. He still held the little photographs in his hand, but his eyes, which had looked so proudly from the pictured loveliness to the beautiful young daughter before him, were covered now with one hand, as if he could not bear to be reminded of the face he had just seen. It was the hand with the long red scar.

Joyce stopped: the anger cleared from her eyes as there leaped to her remembrance the days following Sanctuary Wood, when she and Cousin Edith had waited and longed for more word from doctors and nurses. How could she have forgotten! And here was Daddy Jerry — her old playmate and pal — Daddy Jerry for whom she had been looking all these years. And she had wounded him.

Like mist disappearing before the sun, her anger was gone, and she was back on her father's chair, her arms tight around his neck, her lips to the scar.

"I'm sorry, Daddy," she murmured, "awfully sorry, dreadfully sorry. I don't know how I *could!* Of course, I'll go to Canada if you want me to. Say that you love me just a little. Your voice hurt me."

An hour later, Colonel Hamilton and his daughter were still talking. Joyce's eyes were shining again like pools of cool gray water lit by twin stars.

“Do you have to go to Mrs. Ashton’s? Wait just a minute; you haven’t told me much about Christine yet. She’s going to matter far more than Professor and Mrs. Davidson.”

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCES KEN-JOCKETY

"I HOPE they won't be late," said Colonel Hamilton, looking at his watch for the third time in the last five minutes. "Ah! here they come now."

The Colonel's pleasure and interest had communicated itself to Joyce, and she hurried after him down the platform. When she saw him stop and greet a lady with several children, she almost closed her eyes for a moment before taking the first real look. Supposing they were what she and Cousin Edith had been wont to designate "Impossible"!

The tall lady turned as Joyce approached, and instantly that critical young person's fears were gone. No one could apply the terrible word "impossible" to Mrs. Davidson.

"Distinguished-looking," thought Joyce as she answered Mrs. Davidson's greetings; "and nice eyes and voice — a beautiful voice."

Mrs. Davidson introduced Christine, fair and blue-eyed like her mother, and Peggy, a long-legged, brown-eyed eight-year-old. Dicky, she explained, was seeing the baggageman about the transfer of a piece of luggage which had not been checked through the night before.

"Dicky?" said Colonel Hamilton, looking puzzled. "I thought Andrew was the elder boy."

"So he is," answered Mrs. Davidson, smiling. "Drew and his father went up to camp a week ago to finish some building operations they had on hand, and Richard is our escort. Oh, no, please don't help him," interpreting the Colonel's hasty movement. "He can manage perfectly, I'm sure; there he comes now," as a small boy rushed down the platform. Dicky shook hands, and then looked eagerly and inquiringly at his mother.

"Dicky was very much disappointed that you and Joyce were not able to spend last night with us, and I promised to ask you if he might ask you two or three questions about your flying experiences in France."

"As many as he likes," was the prompt reply.

"Oh, please, no." Mrs. Davidson put up a protesting hand. "I have several questions, myself. Just a couple of minutes, Dicky; we mustn't tax the Colonel's patience."

Dicky drew a long breath, and began at once: "Were you ever upside down while you were up in a flying-machine? What did it feel like? How many did you shoot? How many guns did your machine carry? How —?"

Meanwhile Joyce and Christine were taking stock of each other.

"Um-m — yes — nice —" Joyce was thinking, making use again of that long-suffering word. "Yes, very nice," as Christine suddenly smiled a delicious smile which involved dimples in her cheeks, wrinkles on her nose, and crinkles at the corners of her mouth.

"Goody," Christine was saying to *herself*. "She's perfectly lovely to look at — I adore auburn hair — I'm sure she must be a dear — I'm going to love her."

Aloud she said politely, if conventionally, "I hope you had a pleasant journey."

"Very," said Joyce, just as politely. "Daddy had to see a friend of his in Buffalo on some business matter, so we managed to steal a couple of hours for the Falls, and got in here too late last night to do anything but go straight to the hotel."

"Aren't you just in love with Niagara?" asked Christine. "I'm longing to see the Falls again. I haven't been for nearly two years now. I wonder if they will seem as tremendous as they did last time. And I'm crazy to get back to Ken-jockety — that's the name of our camp — it means 'far from the madding crowd' — don't you think it sounds jolly? And now it's going to be jollier than ever — having you, I mean. We were in England last summer, and it was lovely, of course — but not a bit like Georgian Bay. Have you ever been up the lakes before? Aren't you awfully excited about it? I do wish the train were made up so we could get settled. Have you —? All right, Mummy, I won't talk so much. You see, Joyce, I talk an awful lot — I mean a great deal — but one can't help being frightfully excited the first day of going to camp."

Christine might be garrulous, thought Joyce, but there was no resisting the sunny friendliness of her smile, and the two girls were soon chatting happily as if they had known each other for months instead of minutes.

Dicky, who had been talking to the conductor, interrupted them to say, with an air of dignity and responsibility that was oddly at variance with his freckled face and impudent little nose, "You'd better get in now, girls;

that's the train on track five; the conductor's going to call, 'All aboard,' right away, and then everybody will be rushing for seats."

"Girls!" thought Joyce in amusement. "How old can he be? — nine or ten, I expect."

Colonel Hamilton and Mrs. Davidson were already moving in the direction of track five, but were evidently still absorbed in their low-toned conversation.

Christine and the children got into the train first. Joyce was told to wait outside until the Colonel had settled Mrs. Davidson comfortably, and then he would rejoin her for a last few minutes.

Joyce could see that her father was happy when he came back.

"Joy, dear," he said, "you can't realize yet just how lucky you are to have the chance to be with the Davidsons this summer. But I'm glad for you, now — and you will be, later. I've told Mrs. Davidson that I'll send up a canoe for your use — it won't take you long to learn to handle one — and, as for the sailing, she says that her husband and Drew will gladly teach you, and then — we'll see what we'll see. Good-bye, my dear, I am leaving you in good hands."

Joyce waved to him smilingly as the train moved off. Dear Daddy Jerry! What a king he looked among the other men on the platform! But when she turned to rejoin the Davidsons, the smile was gone. Two months with people she had never seen before! She frowned, then gave herself a little shake. "Remember," she told herself as she took her place beside Christine, who was still talking continuously, "this is to be an adventure, and, so far, the *compagnons de voyage* look interesting."

Mrs. Davidson gave her a friendly smile, asked if she had something interesting to read, and then buried herself in the morning paper.

Dicky and Peggy, who each had been supplied with a book for the journey, also began to read at once, and Christine's head was bent over a little piece of paper on which she was figuring.

Joyce looked idly out of the window as the train left the unlovely city environs behind.

"Why are the outskirts of cities *always* so ugly?" she thought. "The lake *is* beautiful — almost like our own sea — but not so much green in the water. I wonder what Eve Hinkley and Piggy are doing? They must just have arrived at the Bay. I wish I'd seen Piggy's new car."

It was some days before Joyce had time to think of them again.

"Sixty-nine cents," Christine was murmuring absorbedly. "Seven dollars and sixty-nine cents; it can't be right. Now what did I pay for butter? The lettuce was twenty-five —"

She looked up and caught Joyce's eye.

"I'll be through with this in a minute," she announced; "at least, I hope I shall. It's awfully important to start right, isn't it?"

She figured industriously a few moments, frowned anxiously, consulted the change in her purse, and sucked her pencil thoughtfully.

"Did you remember the nickel I borrowed from you?" inquired Peggy gravely.

"Ah, that's it," said Christine with satisfaction. "Loaned Peggy, five cents; balance, seven dollars and sixty-nine cents — and here they are exactly. Doesn't it give you a thrill, a real thrill, to have a balance come out right?" — This to Joyce.

"I hate keeping accounts," said Joyce, "so I never do. Daddy started me once with a little red book years ago, but it was a bore. Cousin

Edith always paid our bills, and gave me my allowance."

"I don't like it either," confessed Christine; "but that's why I have a thrill when it comes out right. I *must* tell you about our plan for this summer's housekeeping. You see, I've always helped Mother a little, dried dishes, and dusted, and done some of the mending; but I'm not a bit tidy or methodical — you might as well know my faults right now — and I don't like housework, anyway, and I just groaned when I found Lisette couldn't come with us this year at all — she lives at home and helps us — so Mother set her wits to work and thought up a beautiful plan. I'm to be in *charge* of the housekeeping." Christine's tones were impressive. "I'm to order what I like, and cook what I like, and that's *all* I'll have to do. Mother is going to see to the rest, and do my sewing for next year. Don't you think that's a fine idea?"

"Well —" began Joyce doubtfully; but she was spared the necessity of choosing between the truth and politeness, for Christine's attention was distracted from her by the approach of two boys who seemed to be on friendly terms with the whole family judging by the warm reception they received.

"Had an idea you'd be on to-day," beamed the taller, who was introduced as "Hugh Dawson, one of our neighbors at camp."

"Drew gave us a tip," explained the younger brother Noel. "Wish we could have gotten away earlier. Drew has all the luck. I bet the fishing has been great."

"Drew's been busy," explained Christine. "He and Daddy are building a little chalet for Joyce and me. We were going to have one some time and this seemed to be a good summer. It's to be down by the sandy cove — I'm just crazy to see it. Hugh, did you know that Judy Benson is to be up this summer? We expect them in a couple of weeks."

"Good," said Hugh heartily. "Glad to see Judy again; they haven't been up for two years, have they? The Adamses are back in our coach, and the Captain's talking about giving a cup as well as the Cock-o'-the-Walk flag to the winner of the dinghy races. Bet you a fish-hook, Dicky, that I wipe old Drew off the map — here, don't get excited, young 'un. Bless my soul, here are Charley and Alison now."

Joyce was introduced to two merry-looking girls who were full of a scheme to make a badminton court on their island, and who immediately invited the party to a bee next week to carry stones.

"Sorry, Charlotte," said Hugh; "I'd like to oblige you, but my heart won't permit anything violent like stone-breaking."

"Too bad," said Charlotte with a twinkle, "and just when we were planning some tournaments. It's a shame you can't play."

"*Touché!*" said Hugh, joining in the laugh. "When is this convict party to be, and I'll order a striped dress-suit for the occasion?"

Not very witty nor yet particularly humorous, but this sort of jesting seemed to give them all innumerable occasions for laughter.

When Allandale was reached, every one hurried out for a breath of fresh air, for the car had been very hot during the last half-hour.

Joyce exclaimed over the beauty of Lake Simcoe, on whose curving shores the station was situated, but the others declared that scenery would wait — she was going to see plenty of it — but if they didn't hurry, the famous Allandale doughnuts would be all gone.

They hastened into the restaurant, which was unusually light and clean, had a little luncheon, and then adjourned to their car with bags of doughnuts and ice-cream cones.

"I dream about Allandale Station during the winter," said Hugh. "It's the only place where I can get all the perfectly good doughnuts I want. Peggy, haven't you got any? Good child; I was afraid I'd have to offer you one. I told an English chap who was taking a flying trip through here observing 'Canadians and Their Ways' about these bags of doughnuts, but he said it sounded 'nasty.' Just like that. And I'm wondering now about Miss Hamilton."

He gave Joyce a quizzical look.

"You needn't any longer," said Joyce promptly. "They're almost, but not *quite* as good as those we have at home."

Christine and Hugh chattered gayly. They didn't seem to mind whether the others listened or not; in fact they often talked at the same time. Any sort of nonsense was grist to Hugh's mill. He was an extraordinarily handsome youth, graceful and debonair in his manner, and always the center of the little group wherever he might be. Noel, who was much quieter and more reserved than his brother, suffered somewhat from the inevitable contrast, but, as Joyce learned, he did not by any means lack character, and could talk very interestingly if Hugh were not there.

Listening to the talk of swimming parties, badminton tournaments, camping trips, and sailing matches, the gloom which was still at the bottom of Joyce's heart began to melt away.

"No riding, no motoring, no dancing!" she had said in dismay to her father. "What in the world am I going to do with myself! I'll have to take to knitting to pass the time!"

The gloom had deepened a little more when she heard that the Davidsons were to have no maid this summer, and that Professor Davidson and Drew were building a chalet themselves. It certainly didn't sound like the sort of thing she had been accustomed to. Joyce was fastidious to the tips of her dainty fingers. Supposing things were really — rough!

However, there was Christine, as nice as could be, and here were Charlotte and Alison, Hugh and Noel, also as nice as could be.

Perhaps this was not only going to be an adventure, but an interesting and diverting adventure!

The journey to Midland passed quickly, and the train ran down to the dock within a few feet of the steamer, so that Joyce had no time to see anything of the town except the big grain elevators at the harbor's edge.

Small boys, barefoot and sunburned, surrounded the travelers as soon as they descended from the train, each of them carrying one, or perhaps two, wooden cigar boxes which they waved persuasively in the faces of the men and boys, saying, "Fresh! Fresh! A dollar a box."

Joyce was astonished. Was this the way Canadians bought their cigars?

Great was the merriment when she found that the boxes contained worms for bait, which cannot be obtained farther north in the rocky country around the Bay.

Hugh and Noel, and even Dicky, were among the buyers. Worms, it seemed, were an inevitable purchase when one came down the Bay to Midland or Penetanguishene.

Mrs. Davidson and Christine saw that some express parcels were on the dock as well as their luggage, and then the whole party went on board the Keewah.

The children, who had been very quiet in the train, being each immersed in story-books, now woke to sudden life. They rushed to the upper deck to pay a visit to the captain, who was an old friend of theirs, and down to the hold to the baggageman, who was another particular friend.

The Keewah moved out into the beautiful harbor. On their right lay wharves, grain elevators, and green farm lands, on the left, high thickly wooded banks, and beyond, the rocky islands of the Georgian Bay.

A flock of gulls that had been idling about at the entrance to the harbor, some wheeling and poising in mid-air, some sitting stolidly on the rocks which showed above the surface of the water, followed the Keewah, expecting as a matter of course to be fed with scraps of bread by the passengers and the cook.

As the boat turned farther out into the bay, the rocky character of this region became more apparent. The Keewah, skillfully guided, pursued an intricate course between the islands, and the shoals and reefs below the surface.

Joyce, unaccustomed to these waters, held her breath once or twice as the boat came within a foot or two of a sharp, cruel-looking reef.

"I never saw so much rock in my life before," she said laughingly to Mrs. Davidson beside whom she was sitting. "It seems as if the natural order of things was reversed — on that island, for instance, there are patches of land and the rest is all rock, and I'd expect to find an island made of land with some patches of rock on it."

She looked down through the water at a great reef which lay near a wharf at which they had stopped to deposit several passengers and the mail bags.

"And as if there were another world down there," she continued; "all made of lovely pinkish clean granite, and the hilltops formed these islands."

Mrs. Davidson looked thoughtfully at her new charge: evidently this was an observant young person.

"You are almost exactly and scientifically right, my dear," she answered, smiling. "We had a geologist in camp the last summer we were up here, and he told us that these islands are the tops of the most ancient mountains in the world, mountains made of granite scrubbed and rubbed for countless years by a great glacier which finally submerged them in a lake."

"Next stop is Wahnanee," said Christine. "Oh, Mum, aren't you excited? I'm just crazy to see everybody, and 'specially Dad and Drew, and the new chalet. I wonder if the little pine-trees we planted have grown, Peggy? Wouldn't it be *too* dreadful if they were not at the dock to meet us?"

"I think myself it would be rather dreadful if they were," said Mrs. Davidson, twinkling at Joyce. "Imagine two little pine-trees coming down to the gangway! Much help they would be with the luggage."

This teasing was evidently lost on Christine, however, for she merely flashed a smile at her mother, ran with Peggy to the little ladder leading to the Captain's bridge, where Dicky sat in proud seclusion, and asked if he could see any sign yet of Wahnanee.

"Sure," said Dicky. "I can see the Huntleys' flag, but don't come round here bothering us, Chris; we got to be quiet."

Not even that dampened Christine's gayety! She was soon pointing out the opening to Wahnanee Bay into which the Keewah presently turned, and then the various cottages placed at vantage-points which would give good harborage and fine views. There were about fifty of these little camps, Joyce learned, in the settlement. Ken-jockety, being one of the farthest away from the steamer's route, was not yet visible.

Dicky was shaken presently from his unwonted quiet by the sight of his father and big brother waiting on the dock, and, with a loud war-whoop of greeting, came down to see to the hand baggage and resume his duties as escort to his mother.

"They'll be mighty glad to see some more bait," was his matter-of-fact comment, as they stood ready for the gangway to be lowered.

There was a crowd of people on the dock waiting for the boat and its passengers, but Christine had pointed out her father, and, from the look on his face as the travelers alighted and were welcomed, Joyce decided that he, at least, was glad to see "something else" besides bait. Her second impression of Professor Davidson was of the oldness and looseness and general oddness of his clothes, and then that, like his wife, he had a beautiful mellow voice.

Drew, like his father, was in well-worn khaki, but there was an alertness in his carriage and a distinction in the poise of his well-shaped head which caught Joyce's attention, and, when his mother released him, and he turned to greet the newcomer, she saw that his eyes were more darkly blue than Christine's and that there was a haunting likeness between his fresh young face and her father's treasured picture of his friend, Michael Lawrence.

Then the whole party, with the exception of Dicky, managed to stow themselves into a diminutive motor-boat, which rejoiced in the descriptive name of "Sputter," and Dicky and the smaller pieces of luggage were packed into the rowboat attached to it by a towline.

There was a waving of good-byes to the Dawsons and the Adamses, promises of meetings in the near future, a short trip past more pine-clad rocky islands, and then Joyce was following Christine up a steep path to a low weather-beaten bungalow, from whose flagpole flew a huge Union Jack as a sign of welcome.

The house at first sight seemed to be mostly veranda and living-room, but evidently there was a kitchen, for Christine said she would deposit her bundles there, and then take Joyce down to their new sleeping-quarters. But instead of reappearing instantly, Christine seemed to have found a treasure: there were shouts of joy and eager talking on the part of the family, and then finally a rather shamefaced Christine appeared.

"Awfully sorry, Joyce, but I forgot about you for the moment. Dad and Drew have built the loveliest bay window in the kitchen and new shelves and the cunningest new service window. I'll show you them later. And now for the chalet. I'm sure you're dying to wash and change. Drew has taken your bag down; the trunks will come over later this evening. Oh, I'm just crazy to see the chalet!"

Christine ran the last few rods of the path which took a sudden turn in the pine-trees, and she disappeared from view.

Joyce followed more slowly: in her mind were pictures of the quaint little chalets she had seen in Switzerland. A few more steps brought her to Christine, who stood with clasped hands gazing ecstatically at — was it a tent? — or what?

"Oh, Drew!" Christine was saying. "It's lovely — absolutely perfect! And you've got the awnings up, too. How ever did you manage to get it finished? You and Dad must have worked like Trojans!"

It was a tent — no, not a tent — for it had a floor and roof of wood. The sides were of mosquito netting with blinds of green-and-white awning. It was bare of furniture, except for a couple of camp cots and chairs.

Drew was evidently pleased with Christine's praises, although, boy like, he tried to hide it.

"Haven't had time to put up the screen door," he said, "but you can hang up a piece of netting until to-morrow, I expect. I fished out all the bathing-suits I could find; they're up on the veranda; I should think you'd all be ready for a swim now."

"Thank you, Drew," said Christine. "We surely are ready. What a mercy I bought bathing-caps the very last thing; I've three of 'em in my bag. I'll run up and get a couple of suits for us, Joyce."

Drew disappeared in the direction of the boat-house, and Joyce, flinging hat and coat down on the bed, sat down on the little chair to take stock of her surroundings.

She looked up at the tent roof, at the uncovered rafters which held the framework together, at the wire screening, at the pine-tree which grew so close that its fragrance filled the little room, at the two plain white cot beds and the bare pine floor, and then out through the doorway to the islands in the bay, and the far horizon of blue water.

"Must be something like the sleeping-quarters at the camp that Eve Hinkley went to last year," she thought. "It smells nice and clean and 'piney,' and that view is wonderful."

She got up to look out at the bay, and just at that instant a brown bug, looking very much like a cockroach, fell from the rafter right on to her coat which lay on the bed.

Joyce flicked it off with a slight shudder, and to her disgust noticed that two or three of the same family were running about near the door.

"Good gracious!" she thought. "Nice and clean! The horrid things! Wouldn't Cousin Edith have a fit!" At the thought of that immaculate lady safe in her luxurious room her niece grinned. Wouldn't she hate this!

Christine came running down the path, two bathing-suits over her arm and an old pair of rubber-soled tennis shoes in her hands.

"Oh, it's awfully nice finding you here," she said, pulling the mosquito netting into place after she had entered. "I said to myself on the way down: 'Now, Christine Davidson, you've probably just dreamed that you will find her at the chalet' — and when I came in, there you were looking out at the bay. Isn't it glorious? Wait till you see it in the early morning."

"I wasn't thinking about scenery, but about — bugs," Joyce said, and then laughed at Christine's surprised look. "I've seen three of them; they look like cockroaches."

"Oh, those!" said Christine in a slightly contemptuous tone. "They're only wood-bugs: they're always in new lumber up here. I remember we had a dreadful time with them when we built the new kitchen. They're clean, and don't bite or anything. Oh, isn't it *gorgeous* to get into a bathing-suit once more! Let's hurry. I can hardly wait to feel the 'coolth' of the water. Let's dive off this rock; it's deep just here, and we can swim around to the dock."

Joyce smiled her assent: one needn't talk much when Christine was happy and excited. They plunged into the deliciously cool water which had a softness quite new to Joyce, and then swam around to join the others.

Peggy and her mother were content to bathe near the shore in a shallow place, but Joyce had her turn with the others at the spring-board, and took one plunge after another until Mrs. Davidson called them to come in, saying that they must not stay too long the first day.

A brisk rub-down and a change into a middy blouse of Christine's was accompanied by a sharp sensation which Joyce had seldom felt of late. Why should she be so hungry? she asked herself. They had had luncheon on the journey and it could not yet be six o'clock.

She helped Christine make up the beds, and was surprised at the number of blankets laid out for their use, but she was assured that the nights were usually cool. They then fastened the cotton netting securely around the doorway and went up to the bungalow.

An appetizing odor greeted them as they passed the kitchen windows, and to her astonishment, as she followed Christine inside, Joyce saw that Drew was cooking something in a frying-pan over a wood fire, and that Dicky was seemingly his aide.

"Nothing for you to do to-night, Sis, except put away the supplies you brought up. This is a men's dinner. Hi, there, Lee Fung Chow, look sharp with those potatoes."

"Me no savee," grinned Dicky. "How can poor Chinee look sharp; the knife *she* sharp!"

The big kitchen, the biggest Joyce had ever seen, was airy and cool with vistas of wood and water from the windows on each side Christine, busily putting away her lettuce and strawberries in the refrigerator on the veranda, and her other supplies in the big pantry which opened off the kitchen, kept up a running commentary of explanations liberally sprinkled with adjectives and adverbs of admiration — of how they got their water, and how useful the coal-oil stove and the fireless cooker were, and how wonderful this new baking-table was going to be.

Joyce helped Dicky peel potatoes, and then placed forks and knives for Peggy, who was setting the table, and by the time the potatoes were soft and creamy and the fish crisp and brown, the whole family were ready and more than ready for supper.

Supper was late according to camping hours, and must, Joyce thought, have tasted all the better for that reason. At least she gave herself that excuse when she did not refuse a second helping of the delicious fish.

Professor Davidson and Drew were kept

busy answering the questions as to who were up in camp now, and who were expected soon, whether Comet was in good trim, and if the red canoe was painted yet.

It was a merry meal, and, after the dishes were washed and put away, the trunks arrived in the caretaker's big motor-launch, just in time to be unpacked before dark.

"We don't want to light a candle or lamp in the chalet to-night if we can help it," said Christine as they got out knickers and middies for the morning's wear. "The mosquitoes are always bad at the beginning of the season. We'll have to hang our dresses over these rafters, I guess, and put up some hooks to-morrow. Then what do you say to bed?"

Joyce acquiesced; she felt unaccountably sleepy. But after she was in bed a disturbing thought assailed her. What if one of those wood-bugs were to fall from the ceiling on to the bed again? She pulled the bedclothes a little more closely around her neck.

"If you hear anything moving in the bushes, don't be alarmed," said Christine at that moment. "It'll probably be just a skunk or a porcupine."

"A porcupine!" said Joyce, jumping up in bed, not at all reassured by this piece of news supposed to be so comforting. "A porcupine!"

She looked at the fragile bit of mosquito netting which, despite Christine's efforts to pin it down tightly, still swayed a little in the breeze.

"And what's to prevent him walking right in — and — and throwing quills at us?"

Joyce laughed a little as if it were perhaps a joke — but she wasn't quite sure —

Christine, however, laughed, as if *she* were quite sure that it was a joke.

"He won't come in," she said confidently; "but, if he comes to the door and begins to throw quills in, I'll waken you so you can see him. Funny how that story has followed poor harmless Mr. Porcupine, isn't it? Why, here's Mother come to tuck us up and I've pinned her out."

Christine was rapidly pulling out the pins as she spoke.

"I suppose she's going to say she hopes I'm happy and comfortable," thought Joyce; "well, I'm not — not a bit — a porcupine or a skunk!"

Mrs. Davidson was giving Christine a good-night kiss and hug. Then she crossed to Joyce's bed.

"There's no moon to-night," she said; "it's cloudy just now and cool, so probably there won't be any whip-poor-will to keep you awake — a sweet sleep and a joyous awakening to you." And her arms were around Joyce, and that young lady was being tucked up warmly and kissed with soft little kisses.

Joyce lay awake for a few minutes trying to sort out the host of new impressions which the first day's adventure had brought her. But she was too sleepy to keep her eyes open. "How quiet everything is, how extraordinarily quiet," she thought, and then — they must have been magical kisses — for, before she had begun to listen for crawling wood-bug, skunk, or porcupine, she was fast asleep dreaming of great white gulls sitting on the rocks and looking tame and friendly until she went near to pat them, when they suddenly began to shoot their feathers at her as if they were porcupine quills, and then, flying away, sang so like the veery she had heard with her father the day before, that her heart was filled with happiness.

CHAPTER III

NEW EXPERIENCES

The sun was shining brightly next morning when Joyce opened her eyes, and Christine, who was already awake, gave a little chuckle when she saw the stare of astonishment with which Joyce looked through the mosquito netting up into pine branches and blue sky beyond.

"I was sure you'd forgotten where you were! Isn't it a glorious morning — so nice and warm? I pulled the top blanket off you an hour or so ago — that's the way with the nights up here; we're cold when we go to bed and sweltering in the morning, unless some kind fairy like me adjusts the bedclothes. Wouldn't you like to go for a dip in the lake? That's the way we take our baths here. I hope you are sufficiently grateful for the way your hair curls. Mine just won't. Here's your bathing-cap. I do hope you're going to like it up here. We'll have lots of jolly times. Would you rather take a sponge bath in here?"

Christine paused for breath, and Joyce

smiled happily. "Do I have to answer all that?" she inquired. "Or may I just get up as an answer?"

A few minutes later, the two girls were standing on the rocks, and Joyce was cautiously feeling the water with one foot.

"I wouldn't do that," advised Christine. "It's always frightfully cold when it's blue and beautiful and still. Let's jump in when I count three. One, two —"

"Two and a half," begged Joyce.

"Two and three quarters," assented Christine.

"Three!" And with a splash they were in! It *was* cold but, oh, how refreshing, and how good they felt after a brisk rub-down!

"Breakfast in half an hour," said Christine, who was dressed first. "Would you like to survey the land while I make porridge and toast?"

Joyce did not linger over her toilette nor did Christine's suggestion attract her. There was a surprisingly empty feeling within her. Perhaps if she set the table, breakfast might be ready five minutes sooner. She followed Christine to the kitchen.

"Table's set," said Christine. "I expect

"LET'S JUMP IN WHEN I COUNT THREE. ONE, TWO—"

Peggy did it. I'll see to the milk and toast and fruit, if you'll make the porridge. The kettle's boiling. We'll have to choose a kind that needn't boil long. I ought to have put some in the fireless last night. Here's the cornmeal. Better make a lot. I wonder where those boys keep the big spoon?"

But Joyce, usually so quick in all her movements, was standing looking almost helplessly at the cornmeal and the porridge pot.

"I'm afraid I don't know how," she said in rather a small voice. "Isn't porridge very difficult to make — without lumps, I mean?"

Strange the little feeling of inferiority she felt as she watched Christine skillfully pouring in the yellow meal. Meanwhile she cut great piles of bread for toast, put it according to Christine's directions in the oven to brown, and watched it anxiously.

Christine worked swiftly, and breakfast was soon ready.

"There! I don't believe there are any lumps in this," she said. "I hope you like cornmeal."

"I never eat porridge," said Joyce firmly. "In fact, I eat very little breakfast and often none at all." And then she added hastily, "But I'm very hungry this morning."

Christine opened her eyes widely at this. "No breakfast! How dreadful! I'm always hungry — but especially in camp. 'Morning, Peggy darling! Put on the milk, like a good child, and then ring the bell. Joyce has made the toast and we're all ready."

"Did you have a good sleep?" asked Mrs. Davidson, coming out to the veranda where the table was laid. "We usually put that question to newcomers to the camp on the first morning after their arrival, and then never again. Every one sleeps soundly up here."

Professor Davidson served the porridge, and Joyce did not refuse her blue bowl; she had a certain curiosity about that cornmeal, and she assuredly was hungry. *Anything* would taste good. It was not until she was wondering whether she might have a third piece of toast that she remembered her remarks about her poor appetite. But no one paid any attention to her third piece of toast: plans for the day were being busily discussed.

"We'll settle the storeroom this morning, Christine," said Mrs. Davidson; "and perhaps I'd better make a dessert for dinner with the fire that's going now —"

"Mother," said Christine impressively, "am

I, or am I not, the housekeeper? Peggy, will you please take Mother away — take her over to see Mrs. Morton or *some* place — I can't be interfered with like this, and I'd better put my foot down at the beginning."

There was a laugh at Mrs. Davidson's expense, but the look of absolute understanding and love that passed between mother and daughter made Joyce feel suddenly lonely and homesick.

"You're forgetting that there are trunks to unpack, patches to put in the wire netting, and covers to put on the sofa cushions," Mrs. Davidson said. "I may not be allowed to cook, but —"

"Oh, Mummy!" called Peggy, who had already left the table. "Let's go down and see how my iris bed is doing — right now before we do the dishes or anything."

"That's a good idea," said her mother cheerfully. "Irises will give us a good start for the day. Bring a basket and the kitchen scissors, Dicky, son, and we'll bring some home."

Joyce stood for a few minutes on the veranda of the main bungalow and looked about her more closely than she had yet had a chance to do.

The bungalow was covered with shingles which had weathered to a beautiful grayish-brown tone that harmonized perfectly with the rocks and trees. From a high central peak the roof sloped out, forming generously wide verandas on all four sides. The most sheltered corner, easy of access from the kitchen, was used as a dining-room, and here was a long table with benches and chairs of pine stained green. The living-room had doors on three sides opening on to the veranda, and many windows, so that on stormy days the room was cheerful. Opening off the living-room were three bedrooms, and the kitchen. The verandas were screened with wire netting, and the furniture was of the simplest variety.

Joyce, accustomed to the luxury and beauty of the seashore hotels where she had spent her holidays heretofore, thought the rooms bare and queer-looking.

"It's plain and strange," she said to herself, as she went down to the chalet, "but interesting. I never saw such *clothes* in my life — but they apparently don't matter here. I'm glad I put in that khaki knicker suit. Drew looks nice in spite of his perfectly dreadful clothes. I wonder what Piggy or Bill Ogden would look like in them? Christine is a *lamb*. How she does talk!"

By this time Joyce was down at the chalet again. She made her bed, and then decided that she'd better do Christine's, since that busy young person had not put in an appearance. She gazed again at the bare walls. Wherever was she to put her clothes? Then she saw what she had not noticed before, that the east wall was of wood right up to the ceiling, and that there was a piece of board at a convenient height for hooks. In fact, there were two of those useful articles already in place on Christine's side of the room.

Just at that moment Dicky appeared whistling loudly.

"Mother says, here are some hooks to go up for your clothes 'n' here's the hammer 'n' some oilcloth 'n' Christine is coming down presently 'n' I'm to put up the hooks for you if you *want* me to."

Dicky's insinuation was very plain. Evidently he had other things on hand more interesting than hooks.

"Don't wait," said Joyce promptly. "Just leave them there. I'll put them up."

Dicky took her at her word and vanished.

Joyce lifted the hammer and a hook and regarded them earnestly. It seemed silly, but never to her remembrance had she hammered anything. Why should she? There had never been any nails to hammer in the various hotels and apartments in which she had lived.

"A nail, of course, would be very simple," mused Joyce, looking doubtfully at the hook, "but this thing curves. I don't see where —"

The hook did curve, and Joyce's fingers received more than their share of the first taps she administered gingerly to its curving surface. But when finally she discovered its screw, and hit upon the brilliant scheme of making a start by hammering a plain nail in a little way, and then pulling it out and screwing the hook in its place, she was filled with an immense pride, and immediately hung up her dressing-gown to see how it would look in its new quarters. When eight of the big hooks had been painfully and slowly screwed into place, Joyce stopped to suck her thumbs and reflect upon her achievement. For it *was* an achievement.

"Good work," said Christine, appearing suddenly with two pieces of fresh gingerbread and two small tin pails.

"Got your hooks up, I see" — casually, just like that, as if hooks were not *hard* to put up! "Aren't you hungry, and don't you want to go berrying? Drew says the patch behind the icehouse is just asking to be picked, and I'm counting on them for dessert."

Joyce was hungry, although it seemed odd to be hungry so soon again. The gingerbread was eaten and praised.

"Put on a hat, and here's some mosquito oil for your neck and hands," cautioned Christine. "The little wretches will be bad down there."

"Then we'd better not go," Joyce almost said, but she checked herself in time. It would be dreadful not to have any dessert, if every one was going to be as hungry for dinner as she had been for breakfast.

The blueberries in the patch behind the icehouse grew in thick grape-like clusters, and they tasted almost as good as they looked. The two girls worked quickly, for the mosquitoes *were* bad, and it seemed to Joyce that by the time she killed one, three more were ready to take its place. She was glad when Drew stopped on his way up to the cottage and agreed to help fill the pails, if Christine would promise to make a blueberry pie.

"No time for a pie to-day, but come and help; it's nearly lunch-time. What a beauty! They *do* taste good; don't you just love them, Joyce?"

"Well," laughed Joyce, "they're good, certainly. I never saw such berries before, so blue, almost like the sky and the water. And I suppose one reason they taste so good is that I never ate them fresh off the bushes before."

"Never went berry-picking!" said Christine in obvious astonishment. "I *am* sorry for you. There, that's enough for to-day. I want to have the meals ready on time."

Joyce was amazed at the appetite she brought to the luncheon-table. Indeed, she was ready and waiting on the dining-room veranda before Christine rang the bell. The long table, with its well-arranged center-piece of irises in an Indian basket, looked very attractive. Joyce had already noticed that, although the covering was of oilcloth, the cutlery of a nondescript camping variety, and the dishes of the simplest ware, the table was daintily and carefully arranged, and the table manners left nothing to be desired.

"Please ring the bell," called Christine from the kitchen. "That gives them five minutes for hand-washing. I hope nobody will be late, for everything is nice and hot now."

But apparently people were not apt to be late at Ken-jockety. Dicky appeared almost before the bell had ceased, and Peggy was a close second.

Every one had been busy all morning, and every one had something interesting to tell: Peggy had discovered a family of minks down near the boat-house; Dicky had found three wasps' nests in the stockade; a humming-bird had alighted on a wild-rosebush near which Professor Davidson had been working; Drew had seen Hugh go skimming past in the Gull; Christine was sure that the same pair of cedar waxwings were nesting near the poplars.

"Who remembers the dish-washing drill?" inquired Professor Davidson, when even Dicky could eat no more blueberry and orange salad, and the cook had been complimented on her success.

"Dish-washing drill?" said Peggy, in puzzled tones. "I don't think —"

"'Course not; you were too little," said Dicky scornfully. "I do. The cook puts the food away: first-chief-washer gathers silver and begins to wash at once; other people wipe their plates with their paper napkins — watch me, Peg, — one, two — there you are!"

The dishes were washed outside on the veranda, and passed in through the new service window, and, before Joyce could believe it possible, the kitchen was tidy, the dishes put away, and the floor swept. Then every one gravitated toward a shady corner of the veranda, where a couple of hammocks were slung.

Mrs. Davidson lay down in one, and Christine invited Joyce to share the other. Professor Davidson installed himself in a big wicker chair, and pulled a book out of his pocket.

"What are we going to read this year, Daddy?" asked Peggy.

"'Treasure Island,'" said Dicky firmly.

"Oh, not that old thing again," protested Drew. "Let's have some Kipling, Dad. Hugh says 'Kim' is great."

"I'd like short stories, me," said Christine.

"You'll each have to have a turn, though half an hour a day is a short time in which to suit everybody's taste. We've got 'Kim,' and I think we'll enjoy that. I was thinking that we might read a little Parkman this summer out of compliment to our guest —" Professor

Davidson smiled in Joyce's direction — "and perhaps we could introduce her to some of our poets."

He turned over the leaves of a slender little gray volume.

"It's Miss Pickthall's 'Poems,'" said Christine joyfully. "Oh, do, please, read that short one with 'the blue ways of the islands' in it."

"Oh, Christine," said her father, "won't you try to begin a sentence without that explosive 'Oh'? And you'll frighten Joyce if you talk so much on her first day."

"Sorry, Daddy," said Christine, "but oh, I have so many things to say!"

"What a bore," thought Joyce. "Poetry and history — ugh — I thought this was supposed to be holiday time — sounds like a school programme. Well, at any rate, half an hour isn't very long and I needn't listen."

But she did listen; every one listened when Professor Davidson read, for he possessed that rarest of gifts, a beautiful mellow speaking voice. Joyce had never realized that reading aloud could be so much like music.

He settled Peggy more comfortably on his knee and began:

"O, the gray rocks of the islands and the hemlock green
above them,
The foam beneath the wild rose bloom, the star above
the shoal;
When I am old and weary I'll wake my heart to love
them,
For the blue ways of the islands are wound about my
soul."

Then followed "The Child's Song of Christmas" for Peggy, and "The Little Sister of the Prophet" for Christine. Mrs. Davidson asked for a "Song of Late September" and "Dawn," and the reading ended with the lovely liquid music of "The Pool."

Joyce, to her own surprise, found the reading all too short, but for one listener at least the combined charm of reader and poet had performed no magic. No sooner had his father closed the book than Dicky bounded to his feet with a very good imitation of an Indian war-whoop. Clearly poetry bored Dicky.

Drew seemed to be asleep, lying full length on the floor, but at the sound of Dicky's joyous whoop he turned over on one elbow and looked thoughtfully at the slight movement in the tree-tops, and then out at the ripples on the water.

"Nice little breeze coming up," he announced. “I want to borrow a tool from Captain Adams. Any person here who would like to come with me in Comet?”

“Me!” shouted Christine and Joyce and Peggy and Dicky with surprising unanimity.

“Not that I have a ghost of a notion as to what or who Comet is, but it sounds swifter than a canoe,” said Joyce, laughing. “And if there’s anything I like in this world, it’s speed.”

Drew grinned appreciatively.

“I’d like to take you out to the Giant’s Tomb after a three days’ blow,” he said. “Then Comet might have a chance, perhaps, to live up to her name. I’ll go down now and get her ready. Would you like to go, Mother?”

“No, thank you, dear. How would it be if Joyce and Christine were to go this time? Perhaps, Dicky, you’d take Peggy and me around to the lagoon. I think I saw some water-lilies there.”

“Sure,” said Dicky, torn between two emotions, for he loved to take his mother canoeing.

“Goody!” said Christine. “We’ll be ready in two minutes, Drew.”

Comet proved to be a trim little fourteen-foot dinghy, ready for her summer’s work in a new dress of gleaming varnish. So this was to be a new experience for Joyce, and she loved new experiences!

She felt a strange awkwardness as she obediently jumped down into Comet after Christine. Where was she to sit?

Drew was looking at the little ripples on the top of the water with a practiced eye.

"Joyce there, Christine here," he said. "Watch for the boom at 'Ready about,' Joyce, please; you won't have to shift your position much; Christine will do the jumping about today — what there is to be done. This little whisper of air can hardly be called a breeze: but it's going to get louder before we come back."

As they pushed off from the dock, Drew pulled in the sail, adjusted the tiller, and away they slipped as the despised little breeze caught the sail.

Joyce turned sparkling eyes toward Christine. "Isn't it a delightful motion!" she said. "I'd no idea such a little wind would carry us along like this. I feel as if I were on the back of some big bird!"

She watched Drew making straight for a group of rocks near Boschink, the smooth, sleek-looking rounded tops of which had earned them the appropriate name of the "Whalebacks." Was Drew watching? *Were* they going to crash on the rocks?

She didn't move — not an eyelash, decided Drew, who was watching her and teasing her by going very close, indeed — but when the command came, "Ready about," and Comet was heading for Gull Island, she experienced an enormous relief.

She watched with keenly observant eyes Drew's skill in tacking again (she was adding to her vocabulary!) at Gull Island, his making the most of every little gust of wind that came down the channels, and finally his neat landing at the Adams's dock.

He refused to let them land: he wanted to get back to his work, for he was putting a patch in the row-boat, and he knew that, if Christine were once to begin talking to Charlotte and Alison, he would have hard work getting her away again. So he ran over to the old boat-house where the Captain kept his tools, fortunately found both the tool and its owner there, and was back in a couple of minutes.

The journey home was speedier, for the

wind *had* freshened according to Drew's prophecy.

"Pretty good behavior for the first time out in a sail-boat," said Drew with a twinkle, as they climbed out on to Ken-jockety's dock.

"Not the first time, really," Joyce said, her eyes still sparkling, her cheeks rosed with excitement and the breeze, "but the first for years and years. Oh, *when* can I learn to sail myself! Daddy said Uncle Graeme was going to be good enough to teach me. He said when I had learned, 'we'd see.' *Do* you suppose he meant that I might have a boat of my own?"

"Perhaps he means to give you one another summer," said Christine practically. "You won't need one this. It would be lovely to have one of one's very own. I'd call it — let me see — the Black Swan, or something like that. Let's think of a nice romantic name. I think names are the most thrilling things! Now, as soon as I heard that your name was Joyce, I just knew we'd be friends. I adore short names; they're so *chic* and quaint and —"

"Go away, go away," said Drew, putting his hands over his ears. "I can't stand any more just now. I think you ought to know, Joyce, that my fluent sister won't be so bad after a while, for we're going to have a fines-box, and as she's almost as keen about ice-cream cones as she is about adjectives and superlatives — 'nuff said."

Christine smiled happily; evidently teasing did not ruffle her feelings one whit.

Joyce went up the path toward the chalet.

"Drew, don't you think she's perfectly adorable?" Christine asked.

"Pretty fair," said Drew. "Here, give me a hand with this sail, Sis — it's a caution the way these things tangle."

"I hope she's going to be happy here," continued Christine in no wise depressed by Drew's lack of enthusiasm. "It isn't a bit what she's been used to, you know. I asked her where she went in the summer, and she said she usually spent the holidays at the sea with her Cousin Edith, and they lived at a big country club, with colored servants and everything."

"Well, she's got to do without colored, and every other kind of servants up here," said Drew, rather dryly. "And if she doesn't like it she can lump it, that's all."

"Oh, Drew, don't be so horrid! Of course she's going to like it. Oh, dear, I must fly. I don't want Mum to touch the blueberries and they must be done. You go down and talk to her while she sketches, like a dear."

Away went Christine.

Drew grinned, but a few minutes later, he joined his mother, who was sketching on the other side of the study.

"Chris said I was to talk to you like-a-dear while you sketched, or talk like-a-dear while you sketched like-a-deer — no, I'm not sure just what she meant — at least, we can say that she probably meant well."

Mrs. Davidson smiled an answer. The friendship and perfect understanding between Drew and Christine was one of the joys of her life.

"Did you have a nice sail?" she inquired, after a moment's hard work on a refractory cloud. "Is Joyce going to enjoy Comet?"

There was more in the question than appeared on the surface.

"Oh, she's a good sport all right, I guess," Drew answered promptly. "She hadn't been in a sail-boat since she was a baby, but you'd never have known it. She kept one eye glued on Chris and the other on me, and her ears pointing forward to catch my slightest word of command."

"She must have been interesting to look at," said his mother with a smile.

"You've said it," commented Drew. "She's a peach. I was afraid she might spoil things — the nice comfy homey feeling, you know — and if you'd asked my blessing on letting her come," he confessed, "I'd have said 'no.' I don't know yet that I approve of her being here *all* summer."

"I'd have talked it over with you, Drew, if there had been time," said Mrs. Davidson, "but there wasn't. I was glad to invite her for her father's sake, and I *think*, though I'm not *certain*, she's going to fit in. If she doesn't, and if she really wants to leave us, her father has said that she may go to her Cousin Edith at the end of a month. But he hopes, and I hope, that she'll decide to stay. I hope it very much, Drew. I can't give you the reasons."

"All right, Mum," said Drew, giving his mother's shoulder an awkward pat, and thereby spoiling the beautiful cloud which she had just completed to her satisfaction. "I'll have an eye to her."

Joyce, meanwhile, tidied her wind-blown

hair, changed for supper, and began a letter to her father.

Her pen did not move very quickly: there was much to write about, but she had not had time to sort out her first impressions; the Davidsons were nice — yes, very — but it certainly was all very strange and queer; she'd better write just a short note now and wait until she had taken stock of her new surroundings before writing fully; Christine was a love, and Peggy — that must be Peggy now out on the rocks there with Dicky — he was a funny little thing, though boys of that age were apt to be a nuisance.

Joyce would have been considerably surprised had she heard the conversation of the last few minutes between Dicky and his sister.

"I can't quite decide whether she's more like the Snow Queen or the youngest sister in that story — you know, the one where rubies and diamonds drop from her lips when she talks."

"More like the wicked sister," suggested Dicky, who was lying on the rocks, placing a little tree-toad on a green leaf and watching eagerly to see if it would change color like a chameleon.

"She is *not!*" said Peggy indignantly.

"She'd be like Cinderella at the ball if she were all dressed in glittering white."

"Yah — never saw a princess with red hair, 'n' I bet she's got a temper like — like fire," said Dicky, who plainly refused to be enthusiastic about the new arrival.

"It isn't red — there she is now," said Peggy in a low tone, "and she looks perfectly beautiful"

Joyce had finished her note and was coming out toward the children.

Dicky was at the age when clean clothes and faces and hands are almost as repugnant to him on others as on himself, and Joyce's immaculate appearance roused the dormant feeling; it pricked also a slumbering conscience, for he was not ready for supper, by no means ready; he was, in fact, exceedingly untidy, and dirty with grease from the boat, and he gloried in the fact. Toronto and clean collars lay only two days behind him.

"Will these letters go out to-night after we mail them, Dicky?" asked Joyce.

Dicky thought it a silly question; he stood up, put one hand to his lips and the other, curved like a speaking-trumpet, to his ear.

"I asked what time does the mail go out?"

repeated Joyce, raising her voice, although she was now quite close to him.

Dicky opened his mouth, and, instead of the pearls and rubies of polite speech, something gray and green, cold and slimy and wet, jumped therefrom, landed on Joyce's bare throat, and, finding it a warm and comfortable resting-place, attempted to snuggle down.

It was certainly a day full of surprising adventures for the little tree-toad, for no sooner had he sensed warmth and comfort, than he was hurled through space and landed with a splash in the deep water. His ears were deaf to the angry words that formed his requiem.

"Here, give back that toad!"

"How dare you!"

For an instant, while Peggy's frightened heart beat one, two, the fairy princess might have been mistaken for a terrifying witch, or even that blood-curdling creature in Father's book called a "Fury."

But it was evidently only a mistake, for a polite young lady was saying to Dicky that she hadn't an idea that he wanted the little toad (the word was accompanied by a slight shudder); in fact, she thought he had thrown it away.

And then the polite young lady had gone back into the chalet leaving Dicky, slightly abashed, but ready, nevertheless, to whisper triumphantly to Peggy —

"What'd I tell you — red *and* fiery!"

CHAPTER IV

A PICNIC AND A SAILING LESSON

"EVER seen a heronry, Joy?" asked Christine as she poured ice-cold milk into the picnic thermos bottles.

"Not that I know of," laughed Joyce. "Is it a new sort of bug, or plant, or bird, or what? Bird, I guess. Chris, look at those dinghies out there! Don't they look exactly like big white butterflies? Oh, I'm just crazy to sail! I've watched Drew, and I wouldn't be a bit afraid to go alone."

"*Wouldn't* you?" said Christine teasingly. "It's not as easy as it looks, *mon enfant*. I was frightened to death the first time I tried it. Let me see, where were we? Oh, yes. You're not being properly interested in the heronry. It's a nesting-place for herons — dozens and dozens of them. You know Dicky is collecting photos of birds and birds' nests this summer — he's trying to beat his chum who is in Muskoka — so we are going to take our supper up there — to the heronry, I mean. I hope the Bensons come to-day. I'm simply dying to see Judy again. We were away, you know, last year, so it's two years since I saw her: she was at York Hill last year in Toronto, you know —"

"No, I don't know," said Joyce. "I fear that I look wiser than I am. There, do you think I've cut enough bread? Surely we can't eat all that!"

"'Course we will — far more — I'll help you. Why-ee — York Hill is a perfectly wonderful school where I'm going next year as a day girl. Judy Benson was there last year boarding; she's a sort of cousin of mine; Mother and her mother are cousins and were chums at school, and she's perfectly lovely — tall, like you, only she's dark — and she's fearfully clever — oh, goodness me, Peggy, are they *truly* waiting for us? We'll be finished in a jiffy."

A jiffy was certainly an optimistic description of the final flurried ten minutes, but at last they were off.

Christine and Drew made a splendid pair of paddlers, thought Joyce, lying at her ease against pillows and lazy-back, while the Veery skimmed lightly over the water. Colonel Hamilton had lost no time in sending up a canoe and Christine had named it the Veery after her favorite bird.

"I feel utterly comfortable and horribly lazy," she said as they neared the river. "Peggy has promised to take me out in the Veery to-morrow morning and put me through my paces, and I'll come to you for the finer points, Chris; you do it beautifully."

"Oh, look, Drew," said Christine, "there are Charlotte and Alison waving to us from their dock. Let's go in for just a minute."

"Well," said Drew, "no long gossip, remember, for we ought not to keep the others waiting."

They did not have to go all the way to the dock, however, for the two girls jumped into their own canoe and met the Veery halfway.

"We were coming over this evening to invite you to a swimming party on Monday," explained Charlotte, "and couldn't resist the temptation to waylay you, since you were passing. Dad has put up a new spring-board on the south shore, and we want you all to come and try it on Monday morning — eleven sharp — beach luncheon to follow — K. and F., B. and B., *s'il vous plaît.*"

"We'd love to, and, as far as I know, we can," said Christine. "May I let you know after church to-morrow?"

"I'm intrigued about K. and F., B. and B.," said Joyce, after they had said good-bye and turned down the channel. "That is, if it isn't a secret. It sounds like a secret society, in which case am I invited? Charlotte seemed to be including me."

Drew joined in Christine's merry laugh.

"Just a homely practical detail," explained Christine. "You see, up here so many camps have picnic-meals with other camps, that the question of having enough bread and butter is a difficulty. One can usually produce enough pork and beans, or fruit, or fish, to meet any emergency, but bread and butter for an extra twenty is a serious matter. And so is cutlery. So we often take knife and fork (and a plate and a cup) and bread and butter for our own camp members if it's a big party. I'm awfully glad Charlotte has asked us. We're sure to have a good time."

An hour's stiff paddling up the river brought them to the sequestered little lake, at one end of which, near a large marsh, was the heronry.

The two canoes were close together as they skirted the reeds bordering the marshy piece of land, and Dicky, who was evidently excited and gloating over his triumph in getting such a picture before his rival collector, Ted Burton, was all for making a landing at once, but his mother was of a different opinion. Her plan was that they should all land on the high rock on the opposite side of the little bay where they would have supper later, and then those who wanted a closer view of the nests could return to the marsh; she and Peggy meant to pick berries.

Drew and Christine elected to go with Dicky, but the others were content with a long-distance views of the nests, which seemed to be nothing but bundles of sticks placed uncomfortably askew in the branches of a grove of pine-trees.

"It doesn't look a bit attractive," said Joyce to Mrs. Davidson as the Veery pushed off.

"It isn't attractive," said Mrs. Davidson. "All right, Peggy, I'll come up in a minute. It's very dirty under the trees, and the birds make a great noise. And" — she lowered her voice — "there are apt to be snakes in the marsh. Peggy was once very badly frightened and bitten by a snake twining around her arm when she was a mere baby, and the sight of one now makes her feel quite ill, although she doesn't know why. So we just avoid even the mention of them, when she is about."

"I'll be very careful, Aunt Fran. I must say I sympathize with her. May I have a pail, too, for berries?"

Joyce climbed the bank with Mrs. Davidson and joined Peggy, who was already picking blueberries and exclaiming at the size and abundance of them. Mrs. Davidson showed Joyce how best to strip the grape-like clusters, and then she moved off to another patch to which Peggy was urgently calling her.

Left to herself, Joyce picked steadily enjoying again the bloom and the color, the fragrance and the taste of the blueberries, and, as she worked, her mind rested — oh, how delightfully! Little pictures of the last few days and happenings slid gently, almost imperceptibly, into her conscious thought: a glimpse of the bathing-beach, the great pine-tree beside the bungalow, a snow-white gull balancing lazily against a dazzling blue sky, the rose-colored sail on an Indian's boat, the dancing flames in the fireplace, Christine's irresistible smile.

Joyce didn't trouble to think; she just let the pictures slip away again. But she was happy, curiously happy, so happy that, when Peggy presently joined her to say in her serious earnest fashion, "Mother says that you mustn't tire yourself picking in the sun, and is there anything else you would like to do until the others come back?" — she was able to answer truthfully: "I'm perfectly happy here. I've got a beautiful patch, and my pail isn't full yet. I'll join you just as soon as it's up to the brim with these beauties."

The bird-hunters came back very much pleased with themselves. Christine had picked up a quantity of feathers, a few of them really beautiful. Drew and Dicky had stalked several of the shy awkward birds and were convinced that they had secured some unique pictures. Dicky had even climbed a high pine in order to take a snap-shot of a nest in a neighboring tree.

Joyce was first to leave the group at the water's edge, and go back to the picnic-meal which Mrs. Davidson and Peggy had spread on a flat rock.

Christine followed in a moment or two.

"Shoo, shoo!" she heard Joyce say indignantly, and then in a louder more emphatic tone, "Scat you — shoo, shoo —"

Then to her horror she saw Joyce attempt-ing to chase away a small black furry animal with two broad white stripes down his back.

"He's the most impertinent thing I ever saw," cried Joyce as she caught sight of Christine. "I thought wild things were afraid of the human eye — here — shoo —" as the unwelcome visitor stepped nearer and sniffed at the milk-pail.

"Hush, sssh," breathed Christine in an agonized whisper. "Sssh — let him alone — don't move an eyelid — it's a skunk — let him have it all — if only —!"

It was a critical moment.

Mr. Skunk had apparently not liked Joyce's tone of voice, for he had erected his big beautiful plume-like tail — sure sign of probable catastrophe.

The girls stood perfectly still. Joyce was almost frightened by the look of horror frozen on Christine's face, and made no protest when the skunk, satisfied, apparently, by the effect he had produced, lowered his tail, sniffed at a plate of eggs and bacon, and, not finding it to his liking, turned and slowly walked away with the dignity of a conqueror, and the assurance of one who does not underestimate his own power.

Not until he had entirely disappeared into the underbrush would Christine permit a sound, and then of course every one talked at once, for the others had come up for supper.

But Christine, as usual, had the last say.

"You're not thankful enough, Joyce," she protested as Joyce began to butter her bread. "I believe you're ready to grumble because your supper is cold, instead of being glad you're alive, or, at least, that we don't all hate the sight or the smell of you. We'd have had to burn all your clothes. I'll never forget the time when Daddy got some on his clothes."

"Oh, well, all's well that ends well," said Joyce lightly. "He's a pretty little creature, isn't he, with those lovely white stripes down his back, and I must say he doesn't appear to be shy."

"He doesn't need to be," commented Professor Davidson dryly. "I believe everything in the woods will run from him. His oil barrage is something like the mustard gas the Germans used in the war."

On the way home Christine was very much excited at the discovery of smoke coming from Boschink's chimney, and wanted to go over at once and see Judy, but her mother thought she had better wait until the next day.

As they left the sheltered channels and neared Ken-jockety, Joyce was surprised to see how the wind had risen, and how big the waves were in the open bay.

Hugh and Noel waved to them as they raced by in their dinghy.

Joyce's eyes sparkled.

"That's what I'd like to do. I suppose it's too rough for sailing."

"Not a bit," said Drew promptly.

"Oh, Mum, *do* let us," implored Christine.

"What do you think, Father?" asked Mrs. Davidson.

"They'll be all right, if Drew has the tiller," said Professor Davidson; "as long as they keep in the inner bay, of course. In fact, if you go behind the Mortons', Drew," he added, turning to his son and putting his arm around Christine who was trying to dance in the midst of some lines he had spread out on the dock, "you might give Joyce her first sailing lesson. You're sure of comparatively quiet water there, with the wind in this direction."

"Better put on 'oilies,' Chris," said Drew, as the two girls turned and raced off to get ready.

"They're splendid in rough water for throwing off the spray," said Christine, fastening the queer helmet-shaped hat under Joyce's chin. "Now, we're ready for anything. *Don't* let me forget the mail-box key and the letter-bag."

Joyce jumped down into Comet.

"Same place?" she inquired of Drew.

"No," he said. "You and Chris both on the top side. It will take all our weight to hold her down."

Away they flew as the wind caught and filled the sail, the dinghy at times standing almost up on one side.

It was a miracle to Joyce how Drew managed to keep his course, and at the same time avoid the big waves which looked as if they would swallow up the light little dinghy. But instead of the waves breaking over the boat, in some magical way (so it seemed to Joyce) Comet managed to ride the waves as if she were their mistress.

There was only a short stretch of rough water, but how Joyce loved every moment of it! She was ready for the Whalebacks this time, and Comet swung about in fine style.

Away they went again, Joyce so happy that she had to sing. The wind carried away the song, but Christine looked at Drew as much as to say, "Didn't I tell you? Isn't she lovely?" and she seemed to be satisfied with his answer.

Professor Davidson was right in his conjecture — the water was comparatively quiet in the sheltered spot behind the Mortons'.

Then began one of the most exciting half-hours in Joyce's life. And she had not heretofore lacked thrills.

It began with Drew's quiet, matter-of-fact words, "Now, Joyce, you take her, and Chris, you be perfectly quiet, please."

Joyce eagerly grasped the tiller. Drew still held the sheet; they were going to do it together. She had a naturally quick, alert mind, but she found that she needed all her wits, with wind and sail, boat and teacher, each demanding her attention.

But Drew was very patient. He took the trouble to answer even the most foolish questions; showed her how to ride the waves by going up to meet them as they came and riding down with them; explained what a difference it made if even one person were to shift his weight in the boat, and how wonderfully sail and rudder worked together.

Then she must learn the meaning of new words, understand what Drew meant when he said, "Keep her pointing just as high as she can," "Spill a little wind," "When you can't hold her down any longer, come up into the wind a bit."

From the Mortons' to the Big Dock and the post-office was not a very long distance, but Joyce's heart had thumped so hard and often, her arm had pulled so (unnecessarily) hard at the sheet, that, when Drew proposed that he should take both sheet and tiller on the way home, Joyce was both reluctant and relieved. But she did not let her mind rest. Those sparkling eyes under the snug-fitting cap's brim were as keenly observant as ever; she didn't miss a point in Drew's skillful tacking on the way home, and when, on their arrival, he complimented her on the progress she had made in her first lesson, she was able to say in all honesty, "What a *lot* I have to learn!"

"Christine," said Joyce solemnly as they undressed that night, "I'll never be happy again in this life until I can sail by myself. I'll chop Uncle Graeme's wood for him, and carry Drew's ice, or do *anything*, if they'll squeeze in some more lessons for me. Isn't it just *glorious!*"

"Yes," said Christine, feeling for once that any adjective was unnecessary. "It is!"

CHAPTER V

"WHAT I HATE, THAT DO I"

NEXT morning, Joyce, who was still apparently trying to make up all the lost sleep of the last month or two, awoke just as Christine was tiptoeing out of the chalet. "Had your dip?" she inquired sleepily.

"Half an hour ago, my child," said Christine. "I meant to steal away and let you sleep on; don't get up until you want to."

Joyce closed her eyes again: she *was* sleepy, and heretofore Sunday morning had always seemed a peculiarly appropriate time in which to make up for lost sleep.

But she could not drift away into unconsciousness again. A friendly chipmunk was chattering on the roof; a warbler in the pine-tree suddenly trilled a postlude to the morning anthems which Joyce had not been awake to hear; something alive and stirring in the very air crept into her consciousness.

She jumped up and ran down to the bathing-beach. How deliciously cool and refreshing the water was! How good to be alive!

"It's too nice a morning to spend in church," she remarked to Christine as she washed the dishes. "Does one *have* to go to church?"

"No, of course not," said Christine, looking surprised. "But you'll be sorry if you don't — Dr. Morton is going to take the service, and he's a dear. I just love him. And we don't have service in a *church*, you know, but in a lovely grove; everybody goes, but of course, if you're tired?"

"I'm not a bit tired," said Joyce, "not a bit. In fact, I feel extraordinarily well. I'd like to race you around the island, and go for a sail in Comet and then do some aqua-planing stunts. Christine, we *must* rig up a board. I'd like to do something exciting, and church doesn't sound that way. Besides, I *hate* going to church, don't you?"

"Why, no," said Christine, again looking astonished. "I like it — especially up here. You'd better come and see — and Judy will be there."

Joyce suddenly felt cross.

"Judy!" "Judy!" "Judy!" She didn't want to see this paragon of Christine's of whose very name she was tired, and she didn't want to go to church — certainly not — of course Christine might like it — but she, Joyce, had long ago decided that all church-going was a bore. Christine *was* childish about some things, there was no doubt about that.

Nevertheless, she went down to the chalet to get her hat, and on the way back met Dicky looking very unfamiliar in spotlessly white "longs," shoes, and shirt.

Joyce opened her lips to chaff him on his Sabbath-like appearance, when suddenly, from the thick branches of the pine-tree just overhead, there came a shrill scream like the angry cry of some wild thing about to spring. It was so strange, so unlike anything she had ever heard before, that Joyce involuntarily put her hands up to ward off whatever might be coming.

There was a stir in the branches and then silence.

Joyce took two or three hurried steps away from the tree, and then turned a rather white questioning face toward Dicky.

"We better run," he whispered. "Sounded like a wild-cat, don't you think?"

"Yes," said Joyce, who hadn't a ghost of a notion as to what a wild-cat did sound like.

At the dock she found the Bensons' boat just pulling up alongside, and in the Babel of greetings and questions and answers, she had no opportunity to tell her tale.

In fact a lively curiosity concerning the much-talked-of Judith banished the remembrance of the wild-cat's scream for the time being. So this was Christine's heroine!

Joyce was prepared to be very critical, but she could discover little to find fault with at first glance.

Judith was as tall and slim as she herself, her white skirt and blouse as trim and well-tailored as the most fastidious could demand, her carriage as graceful, her voice as well-modulated, and there was something in the frank, friendly gaze with which she looked at Joyce, as Christine introduced them, that seemed to disarm criticism.

It appeared that they were all going in the Bensons' big boat, Gray Goose, "For you know what Sputter is when you're in clean white clothes," laughed Christine. "Clean things must enrage her, for she *always* sputters and spits at the sight of them."

The motor in the Bensons' boat was in the bow and covered by a hood, so that there was not the same danger of sputterings of grease, but something was rattling so that conversation could not become general. A short run brought them to the dock beside the grove where the service was to take place.

Hugh Dawson helped them to land, greeted the ladies, and then said reproachfully in a piercing whisper:

"I say, Christine, introduce me to that stunning young lady, 'glass of fashion and mould of form' — what? Direct from little old New York, I should say."

Hugh always reduced Christine to giggles.

"You know perfectly well, Hugh, that it's Judy, and she hasn't changed a bit."

"My little friend, Judy, that sweet child!" said Hugh with a dramatic start. "How tempus *does* fugit! It seems only yesterday that she played about my knee, and now —"

"Spare me, please," said Judith, laughing. "You can think up some adequate epithets, while I talk to Noel. I haven't had a chance to say 'how do you do' to him."

Noel, as usual, was too shy to have much to say even to Judith whom he had known for years, and Judith turned to make some polite remark to Joyce with whom so far she had not had an opportunity to speak. The elders of the party had gone up to the grove.

"Does it look wild and strange to you up here?" she asked. "I remember a friend of Mother's who came up from Boston thought this the most uncivilized place she had ever seen."

"My cousin is sure that I am going to be kidnaped by Indians," said Joyce, "and when I write her that a wild-cat screamed this morning from a branch right over my head, she'll be more convinced than ever that I've gone to the ends of the earth."

"A wild-cat?" cried Hugh, and Drew, and Christine, and Judith, in varying tones of incredulity.

"A wild-cat," asserted Dicky stoutly with a solemn wink at Hugh. "A blue wild-cat! You know the kind — blue, with white and black stripes."

"A blue jay!" said Christine. "You bad boy to tease Joyce like that."

There was a general laugh which ceased almost as quickly as it began. For Joyce, realizing that she had been "had" by Dicky, and that she had made herself seem ridiculously innocent and gullible, felt one of those quick passionate gusts of anger which shook her self-control and polite manners from her like a veil.

"Dicky!" said Christine reproachfully.

"It *is* like a wild-cat," said Judith.

"Come on *quickly*," said Drew; "the others have all gone up; we'd no right to stay so long, we're going to be late; come on."

Joyce followed him as if hypnotized by his urgency, and sat down quietly enough on the cushion he placed for her, but inwardly she was raging — at Dicky for the first five minutes, and then at herself, for being such a fool as to show that she cared. *Why* in the world did she let herself go like that! These gusts of anger had been growing in frequency lately.

So absorbed was she in her own feelings that she had been standing sharing Drew's hymn-book for several minutes before she noticed that some one — why, it was Aunt Fran! — was playing a little organ, and every one was singing. Both tune and words were unfamiliar to Joyce, but there was something dignified and reassuring about the music, something steadying and quieting about the way it was sung, that cleared the mists of anger from eyes and mind, and by the time Dr. Morton had finished reading the lesson, Joyce was herself again, and ready to listen to what was being said.

Not that she meant to listen.

"What a lovely glimpse of water through those trees!" she thought. "Not a half-bad place to have church. I'll have a nice little rest while the minister preaches. Funny that he can look so happy when he lost his only two sons in the war! You'd think these boys would remind him, and he seems to be looking right at them, Drew and Hugh and Noel and Dicky and all of them sitting on the ridge of rock above. Yes, there's no doubt, Judith is nice to look at — *distinguée* — she must think me a goose and a silly baby to show such a childish lack of self-control. I'm glad Aunt Fran wasn't there. Well, *I'm going to cut out* this temper business. But I've decided that before! There doesn't seem to be much use trying."

"What *is* the minister talking about? Oh, Saint Paul. All ministers seem to preach about Saint Paul a lot. Why can't they? —"

"For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."

The clear ringing tones broke into her thoughts and compelled attention.

"But what I hate, that do I."

"How queer," thought Joyce. "That's just what I do."

She listened as she had never hitherto listened to a sermon and did some quick thinking during the singing of "Fight the Good Fight."

So that was why Christine had looked sorrowful, and why Drew had with obvious clumsy masculine tact drawn her away before she could speak the angry words surging to her lips. They were ashamed for her! They wanted to help her hide the fact that she was what the padre would call a "slacker." Or perhaps they thought that she was fighting and being beaten. Beaten? She winced at the word and threw back her head proudly. A *Hamilton* beaten! She could have laughed at the idea. Or afraid? She was afraid of nothing. Nothing. Then was she afraid to try? And there were reserves in the rear, the padre was confident of that, great reserves of Power at Headquarters.

She *would* try, harder than ever; she would *not* lose her temper again. Dicky might say or do anything he pleased from now on.

Sunday was a quiet day in Wahnanee Bay, and the Davidsons tried to make no engagements, so that they might have one day in the week, at least, in which they might enjoy one another.

The day had been hot and the evening did not bring its customary coolness. Bed at ten o'clock after a quiet day was singularly uninviting to Joyce, but she undressed and put out the light in order that Christine might not be disturbed.

The night was still; not a leaf was shaken by the tiniest breeze. There had been an exquisitely lovely sunset and afterglow, and now the moon was making a fairy-like pathway on the water.

"It's much too beautiful out of doors to waste time in sleeping," thought Joyce, sitting up in bed looking out over the water.

The shy little wood-folk were evidently of the same mind, for in the stillness all sorts of tiny, usually unnoticed, noises were heard. Then a whip-poor-will, apparently in a clump of bushes a few yards away from the chalet, began repeating his plaintive "whip-poor-will" with the maddening persistency of a mechanical toy, and when a relative on the other end of the island made the same insane remark, but in a different rhythm, Joyce jumped out of bed.

"What's the matter?" asked Christine sleepily.

"Nothing," said Joyce. "Sorry if I've wakened you. But how *can* you sleep with that wretched whip-poor-will about!"

"It does sound silly, if you listen," said Christine.

"It's *maddening*," retorted Joyce. "If only he'd keep time I wouldn't mind so much, but he seems to run down like a musical clock and then start again with a jerk in an entirely different rhythm. I suppose one shoe wouldn't frighten him sufficiently to choke his song, but I'll try it." And with the words she hurled her shoe into the bushes. Silence followed and Joyce went back into bed again.

Then, "whip-poor-will," "whip-poor-will," "whip-poor-will" came more plaintively than ever from the other side of the chalet, and at the same time some little creature began running up and down on the wire screen of the door.

A spry little chipmunk it was, evidently out for a lark. The dark stripes down his back and the soft creamy fur under his chin showed up plainly, and Joyce declared that she could see the wicked twinkle in his eye. "But, you see, he doesn't know that I have two shoes, and that I like a joke as well as he does. That poor little chipmunk is going to get the shock of his young life, Chris. Now, then, Mr. Chippy" — and, creeping softly to the door, Joyce slapped the screening sharply with the sole of her shoe, so that Mr. Chippy flew head over heels over the bushes and rolled down on the rock where he picked himself up and addressed some very bad language to the world in general.

"It's a gorgeous night, Chris. If I had some of your adjectives I'd use them now," declared Joyce, sitting on the edge of Christine's bed. "Sleepy, Chris, dear?"

"Well, not *now*," said Christine good-naturedly, "but I *might* have been!"

"Let's go in for a dip, it's as light as day!"

"Right-o — I'll run up to the house and ask Mother, her light is still on — probably she'll come too."

A few minutes later Professor and Mrs. Davidson and the two girls very quietly, so as not to waken Peggy, crept like conspirators down to the bathing-beach, and slipped into the shimmering coolness of the bay.

"Not beyond the dock," cautioned Professor Davidson. "And no diving, remember. This light is very treacherous."

"Oh, it's so beautiful, beautiful," chanted

Christine, floating on the silvery path on the water.

"If I could just see a little whip-poor-will in danger of drowning and make him promise faithfully before I saved him never to say 'whip-poor-will' again, but learn to sing a little song like other well-brought-up birds, *I'd* be happy," said Joyce.

Down in the west hung Venus, her soft radiant light dimming the stars near by.

The bathers were out of the water now, had put on their cloaks and were ready to go back.

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?" quoted Mrs. Davidson softly.

"What are those lines of Blake's, Daddy," asked Christine, "the ones with, 'washing the dusk with silver' in them? It *is* nice that we have poets to express our most beautiful moments — and fathers and mothers who don't forget the words."

"Blake would have liked it up here," said Mrs. Davidson. "Say the lines for us, dear, it will be a beautiful closing for the day. Nobody cold, I hope?"

"I wish I could live up to Christine's description of me," said Professor Davidson, "but I can't remember the beginning of 'To the evening star'; it ends this way:

> "'and, while thou drawest the
> Blue curtains of the sky, scatter thy silver dew
> On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes
> In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on
> The lake; speak silence with thy glimmering eyes
> And wash the dusk with silver.'"

Good-nights were said, and, cool and refreshed, Joyce got back into bed again. This time she did feel sleepy.

"They're dears," she thought drowsily. "Chris is luckier than she knows — I hope I don't ever lose my temper in front of Aunt Fran — but I'm not going to ever again — queer, isn't it, to quote poetry and the Bible — just as if it was an *ordinary* thing to do — but it was nice — 'And wash the dusk with silver.'"

CHAPTER VI

HER FIRST BASS

The third week of Joyce's stay at Ken-jockety was memorable as a week of several first things: there was the day when for the first time, she went off all by her lone in the Veery to explore Little Moon Island, and there was the day when she caught her first bass — that was a day to be remembered!

Little Moon Island had possessed some strange attraction for Joyce from her very first view of it. Several times they had planned to cross the lagoon-like channel and eat their supper in some delectable spot on the beautiful island shaped like a crescent moon, but each time, a visitor, or a late mail-boat, or a heavy wind, or something, had interfered.

On this particular morning, Drew having pronounced her quite able "to paddle her own canoe," Joyce had asked, and received, permission, to paddle herself across to Little Moon and explore it all by herself.

Every one else was busy; poor Christine had discovered ants in the storeroom and was turning out supplies to see if they were safe, destroying some, and tying up others still more firmly; Mrs. Davidson and Peggy were renovating the picnic-basket and reluctant to leave their task undone; Drew and Dicky were nowhere to be seen; so Joyce, nothing loath, set off alone.

The waters of the bay were quiet, and she had no difficulty in guiding the Veery across the channel, past the southern wooded bank and up into the harbor where she lay drifting with the slow, pulsing movement of the water, watching the great fleecy white clouds, and dreaming happy day-dreams.

She felt quite as if she were beginning an adventure when finally she landed on the gravelly beach, drew up her canoe, and set out to explore.

Little Moon in formation was very much like Ken-jockety — wide stretches of pinkish granite with blueberries growing thickly in the pockets of earth; here and there was a clump of pines with a few red cedars, and on the southern shore, near where she had landed, a grove of poplar and birch. Like Ken-jockety, Little Moon had a piece of higher ground, or rock rather, to which Joyce ran with a little cry of pleasure.

"What a jewel of a place for a house!" she said aloud. "Enough pines to shelter it from the north and west winds, but a good view of the sunset — oh — just look at that view of sky and water!"

And then she laughed when she realized that she was addressing no one at all, that, in fact, she was absolutely and entirely alone.

She threw herself down under a pine-tree and looked out over the blue waters; a chipmunk scolded her for a moment or two from the branches overhead, and then, finding that she was very quiet and seemed harmless enough, set about his own business; a big King Billy butterfly fluttered lazily over a stalk of milkweed, and his wonderful jewel-like coloring gave her a thrill of pleasure; a gull near by was hovering and poising, floating and swimming, his white wings silhouetted against the dazzling blue sky.

Joyce watched him with the keenest pleasure. She closed her eyes and drew in big breaths of the clean, clean air. How *delicious* it was! And how delightful to be alone! Had she ever been really alone in her life before? She doubted it. Some one had always been within call. She would have laughed at the very idea a few weeks ago, but it was, it truly was, delightful, this *quiet*, which she had found so strange on the first night of her stay in camp.

Little Moon was thoroughly explored, and pronounced to be even a more perfect island than Ken-jockety, for its pines were larger and more numerous, its northern shore higher, and its view wider than that of its neighbor.

"And I simply cannot understand," said Joyce at the dinner-table, "why the man who owns it doesn't build a house and live there. I don't believe in absentee landlords, do you, Uncle Graeme?"

"No," said Professor Davidson emphatically, "I don't. It would give me a great deal of pleasure to see the owner build there."

"What is his name?" asked Joyce idly.

But just at that identical moment Mrs. Davidson upset her tumbler of water, and in the flurry of wiping up the water, Joyce's question remained unanswered.

And then the day when she caught her first bass! That was a most exciting and thrilling day, just packed with happiness from beginning to end. Joyce knew it was going to be wonderful even before she opened her eyes. In fact she woke with a smile on her lips.

"What's the joke?" asked Christine, who was already in her bathing-suit. "You don't look as if you'd been kept awake for hours by a miserable whip-poor-will."

"Goodness me!" said Joyce, sitting up and rubbing her eyes. "Isn't it a bee-yew-tiful day! And listen to that bird — is it a song sparrow? I don't know why I was grinning — dreaming about the picnic, perhaps!"

By eight o'clock both girls were hard at work in the big airy kitchen: Christine was packing the picnic-basket, and Joyce was bending solicitously over a pan of fluffy-looking wheat muffins.

"They look all right," she said doubtfully. "Perhaps they're *too* light."

"Couldn't be," said Christine reassuringly. "Ring the bell now, Joy, please — we've to start at nine, you know, so we'll have to hurry a bit."

Plans for the day's outing were discussed with great vigor at the breakfast-table.

"Hugh says the fishing is excellent at the lake," said Professor Davidson. "I'm going to try my luck beside the Skull."

"I bet we'll get more than the Dawsons did," declared Dicky. "There are four of us men."

"Well, see that all of us men sit still," said his father after a general laugh at Dicky's expense.

"Yes, sir," said Dicky, in no wise abashed. "I don't think Christine ought to be allowed to fish, do you? Fish *hate* being talked to, 'n' she squealed like anything when I caught the big pike last year."

"You were too frightened to squeal," retorted Christine. "Mother, what should we take for supper in case they don't catch any fish?"

"Beans, please," said Drew. "I'm going to cook the supper and I'd like something easy. And put in some pancake flour, Chris. Are the baskets ready?"

"Not quite," said Christine. "Are you finished, Joyce? May we be excused, Mum, and we'll finish packing them?"

Joyce had seen Christine busy with baskets before breakfast, but she had been too much engrossed with her muffin-making to notice that they were very special baskets indeed.

Now she had a chance to investigate them as she filled little tins with sugar and coffee and salt.

"We call this one the Blue Basket," explained Christine, showing the broad blue band which ran around the rim. "I gave Minjek, an old squaw, my blanket coat in exchange for it last summer. She was glad to get it for one of her horde of grandchildren, and I was gladder to see it go — it was awfully old-fashioned, but warm, and I was afraid I'd have to wear it another year. Where *did* I put those aluminum salt and peppers? Oh, here they are — where was I? — oh, yes — it looked such a nice big firm basket we decided to make a picnic-hamper of it, and Mum and Peggy fitted it up, yesterday. It's a duck, isn't it?"

It *was* a duck, Joyce agreed, as she examined the pockets lining the basket to hold cutlery and paper napkins, a dish-mop, soap, two flannel holders for lifting pots, a long fork for testing potatoes, a tin of cleansing compound, a can-opener, and a corkscrew.

"We'll put the dishes in here," continued Christine, deftly wiping white enameled cups and plates. "The food goes in another basket. We always wash the dishes at picnics and put them back here, and then it's no bother to get ready for the next one."

"What's this thing at the bottom?" asked

Joyce, holding up a bit of hinged iron grating a couple of feet long.

"Oh, there it is!" said Christine with relief. "I've been looking everywhere for it — it's usually dirty so we don't keep it in the basket — it fits into a duck bag. Drew invented it and it's awfully useful — wait until you are cooking fish and pancakes and coffee over a camp-fire all at once, and you'll be awfully thankful for something to put over the stones to keep the pots steady. A coffee-pot's awfully tippy — oh, dear, that's three 'awfully's' in one breath — do pinch me, Joyce, when I say it. I'm trying awfully hard, but it's awfully difficult!"

Joyce solemnly administered two small pinches on the dimpled cheeks and then a large-sized hug by way of amendment.

"Eight fifty-five," called Professor Davidson warningly.

There was a tremendous running to and fro, a hasty gathering-up of bathing-suits and picnic-baskets, fishing-rods and worms, cameras and books, knitting-bags and mosquito oil; but at nine o'clock exactly the whole party was assembled on the wharf. They stowed themselves and their baskets in Sputter, and

Dicky with the fishing-tackle and bait — which last he refused to trust to any one else — took possession of one of the canoes which were towed behind.

Conversation, as long as Sputter was living up to her name, was limited to short remarks about the beauty of the day. But trite as these statements were, they were delightfully true. Sky and water were of that serene blue that spells fair weather: a few white clouds floated high above their heads and served but to accentuate the dazzling blueness; a breeze, deliciously fresh and clean, ruffled the water into sparkling little waves, and dispelled any serious misgivings as to the misdeeds of that persistent pest, the mosquito.

They crossed the main bay threading their way through the islands and past a number of cottages, and then were soon ascending the Wahnanee River.

The banks were steep and high, the great rocky cliffs looking rather gray and grim in the strong sunlight. Pines grew everywhere even in the barest-looking crevices in the rocks, and in places the thick woods crept down almost to the shore.

Half an hour's hard work brought a day's rest to Sputter, for she was tied up at the entrance to the lumber chute at the head of the river, where the first portage was to be made.

The Gray Goose was already there, and the Bensons were preparing for the portage.

Portaging was a new experience for Joyce, and she was an interested onlooker while Drew padded the shoulders of the two older men with boat cushions and helped adjust the canoes on them. How long and unwieldy the Veery looked balancing on Professor Davidson's shoulders! Then, waiting until the two curious-looking figures had disappeared down the leafy trail, Drew seized the red canoe, swung it on to his shoulders, and with a whoop followed the others.

"Won't they suffocate?" asked Joyce of Christine. "I don't see how in the world Drew can manage the red canoe — it's frightfully heavy."

"Well, Drew's pretty strong," said Christine, not without pride. "Dad and Uncle Ben will be 'puffed,' I expect — it's hot work, but fortunately a short portage. Will you take Drew's precious kit-bag, Joyce, and the camera and two paddles? Mother, don't you and Aunt Margaret take a single thing."

However, Mrs. Davidson and Mrs. Benson refused to be disposed of as easily as that, and claimed their share of the multitude of small things to be carried. Then in single file they followed Dicky's lead through the woods. The bushes grew high on either side and the branches of the tall slender maples formed a shady canopy, but no one lingered to admire the beauty of the scene, for the mosquitoes had here a lurking-place and fell upon the stragglers.

Joyce followed the example of the others, broke off a couple of bracken fronds and tried — unsuccessfully — to keep off the pests.

At the end of the trail the two men were found sitting on the rocks fanning themselves, while Drew, exulting privately in his own splendid young strength, chaffed them gayly, and inquired solicitously whether they would be able to paddle across the lake, or would he come back for them after he had taken his mother across.

"Wait till I've been up here a week or two, you young scoundrel," growled Uncle Ben, "and I'll make you eat those scornful words. I'd make you do it now if it weren't so beastly hot."

"Poor old Daddy, he's blowing like a grampus — a grampus does blow, doesn't it?" said Judith. "It sounds ancient, anyway, and ought to be tenderly cared for. You shall stretch your tired self in the Gosling and your dutiful daughter shall ferry you across in ease."

It was noon by the time they had made the second short portage and found a camping-spot on Little Bass Lake. A cold luncheon was hastily dispatched, for the fishermen were anxious to be off.

"How are we going to divide up?" asked Judith. "*Moi* — I'm not at all keen to fish, so I'll paddle."

"Nor me," said Christine, "but I do want Joyce to get a good fish." She looked beseechingly at Drew.

"We-l-l," said Drew slowly, relinquishing his plan to go with his father and Dr. Benson, who were taking possession of the red canoe. "If Joyce will invite me to go in the Veery, I'll invite Judith and we'll go to the Elbow — an Elbow's as good as a Skull any day — and we'll bring home more fish than all the rest of you put together."

So it was agreed. Mrs. Davidson and Mrs. Benson settled down for a rest, Christine and

Peggy decided to troll for pike, and the others divided the bait and went off full of boastings as to the fish they would bring back for supper.

It was hot in the early afternoon hours. The little breeze which had promised to be so delightfully refreshing had died down. Drew stopped in the shadow of the big rocks, and they dropped their lines in the dark, deep-looking water, but it was evidently too hot a day to tempt the fish. Drew had a nibble or two and had to replenish his bait. Judith pulled in a small bass, below size, and then nothing happened for a long time.

Joyce was disgusted. "If these are the joys of fishing, then give me something else," she said to herself as the afternoon shadows lengthened. The sunburn on her neck and arms was stinging, all her mosquito bites, old and new, added torment, and her legs were cramped in an uncomfortable position. Altogether Miss Hamilton longed for a comfortable hammock on the big shady veranda at Ken-jockety; she even played with thoughts of her old room beside Cousin Edith's with its green-shuttered, white-tiled bathroom. Involuntarily she sighed. At any rate, she needn't stay here any longer and blister in the heat. She'd just ask Drew to take her back to the camping-place, and then he and Judith could go on sitting in the sun like graven images for hours and hours if they liked; as for her, she was bored — absolutely bored by it.

Joyce was actually opening her mouth to make the request when she suddenly stopped.

"A pretty raw deal, if you ask me," said a little voice deep down within her. "Pretty decent of Drew to bring you and Judy over here when he really wanted to go with the men — yes, he did want to, you know it, Joyce Virginia Hamilton. Nice thing it'd be to ask him to give up an hour of the short time he's got, to take you back — besides, he'd be *pleased*, wouldn't he, at the success of *his* fishing-party."

"Well, it didn't succeed," moaned Joyce Virginia Hamilton, now thoroughly sorry for herself. "I don't want to stay, and I'll have a headache if I do."

"It wouldn't hurt you *very* badly if you did," was the unsympathetic answer, "and you probably won't. No! The only decent thing for you to do is to sit still and pretend you're enjoying yourself."

"Very well," said Joyce Virginia rather crossly; "then I'll have to pretend."

She didn't have to pretend for very long. At that identical moment she felt a tug at the end of her line — just a gentle little tug, but an electric thrill shot up her arm and down her spine. There were other tugs — big imperative ones. The line reeled out with frightening speed!

Drew acted quickly.

"Here, Judy, take my line — wind 'em both in. Gee, Joyce, he's a big one, no mistake. Let him right out — now wind it up a bit — get the landing-net, Judy, as soon as you can — give him his head again, Joyce — steady — don't lean over —"

Drew was paddling with a skill that Joyce could not appreciate.

Four times she played her fish almost up to the canoe and then he broke away again.

"Never mind," said Drew consolingly after the last failure. "We'll get him this time — now — go easy — and *don't* lean over — now — now — ah — what a beaut!"

He *was* a beauty gleaming through the meshes of the net!

Joyce surveyed him, and then turned away with a little shudder as Drew reached for the blunt stick. It seemed a shame — he had fought so gallantly!

But Judith gave Joyce no time for further thought. "He must be three pounds — you take Drew's rod, please, Joyce. I want to catch one *immediately*, if not sooner — thanks, the bait's all right."

"I'll take the paddle," volunteered Joyce, "but if either of you catch a big one I'm afraid I can't steer well enough."

Joyce had turned the luck evidently, for the next hour, though it brought no more beauties, netted them seven fair-sized black bass and several rock bass.

"Guess we'll have to go," said Drew reluctantly, as he pulled in his fifth. "The others are steering for shore. These fish must be cleaned before we have supper, and it'll have to be early unless we want to be eaten by mosquitoes. I bet you a quart of huckleberries we've got the prize fish."

"Show me your minnows, you fellows," he called derisively as they landed.

"Minnows, nothing!" yelled Dicky. "Seven pounds, I bet."

"Of what?" returned Drew promptly.

"Pike — yah! Who wants pike when he can have all the bass we've got? Hold it up, Joyce. There, what'd I tell you! And gamey, too! Gave Joyce a dandy fight, but she got him."

Joyce glowed as she said, "I couldn't have gotten him alone."

Judith had the camera ready, and Joyce was snapped holding her big bass, and Dicky with his monster pike, and the two men with *their* catch — a good catch, too, though they had no sensational prize.

Fires were lighted and frying-pans put on the coals at the proper moment, and soon a savory fragrance was tantalizing others besides Dicky, who announced himself as starving to death.

Never did anything taste as good, thought Joyce, as she took her first mouthful of the crisp brown fish. There must be some magic in the cold blue water and the fire of spicy pine. Mere ordinary fish could not be so delectable. But then this was no mere ordinary fish, for she was eating a portion of the very one she herself had caught. She wished Judith had been as lucky.

"And I don't deserve it," she told herself a little later on the way home. "Just think, Joyce Virginia Hamilton, how ashamed you'd be right now, and how this lovely day would have been spoiled, if you'd been a selfish pig about going back."

Joyce didn't moralize for long.

"Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques,
Dormez-vous, dormez-vous?"

sang Christine and Judith and Drew in the red canoe which led the way into the sunset.

Joyce joined with a will in the singing of the old French round and smiled to herself as she thought of the letter she would write her father next morning.

Oh, a very happy day!

CHAPTER VII

AN ADVENTURE WITH A SNAKE

"Chris, *what* do you think?" asked Judith impressively as she drew up beside Ken-jockety's wharf in the Gosling.

"Lots of things," said Christine promptly. "For instance, that I'm glad I made the sort of salad that you like best, because you simply *must* come to the beaver dam for luncheon with us, and that I love that violet middy-tie — where *did* you get it? — and that if my hair would curl like Joy's I'd be perfectly and absolutely happy — isn't it lovely? — and that I saw two night-hawks on the rocks this morning. *Do* say you'll come to luncheon. Dad and Drew are going up to the Musquash River afterwards — they will be out overnight — and —"

"Stop her, stop her, Joyce!" cried Judith, putting her hands over her ears. "Do you know," she continued solemnly, "I don't believe you'd better try to get into York Hill this fall, Chris. You see there are several other girls there who like to talk, and, as they'd have no chance once you arrived, you'd be frightfully unpopular."

"I'm improving," said Christine, dimpling. "Joyce tells me so almost every day. What's your news?"

"Hugh and Noel were over yesterday helping us build a big bonfire," said Judith — "by the way, will you all come to-morrow and watch it burn? — and Hugh says" — Judith's tones were impressive — "that Mrs. Dawson is going to give a party for all of us."

"Hurrah!" cried Christine. "Three cheers for Mrs. Dawson!"

"Hugh wants ideas from us," continued Judith. "He suggests that we go in fancy dress. What do you think?"

"Good idea," said Christine, "except that we haven't many things up here to use. Howsomever, we can talk it over this afternoon. Did you bring your bathing-suit?"

"No," said Judith, "but if you'll wait for me, I'll run across to ask about going with you for luncheon, and I'll bring my suit back with me. If I lower the flag to halfmast, that means I can't come. You keep an eye on the flag, will you, Joyce?"

She was back very quickly, however, and

the three of them enjoyed a good swim. They were just coming out, when Joyce uttered a startled cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Christine quickly, for Joyce's face was white.

"A snake!" cried Joyce. "There — look, swimming — suppose he should land!"

But Mr. Snake had apparently no such intention, for he headed straight across the channel.

"Just a water-snake," said Christine in a relieved tone. "They won't hurt you — always run away — and none of the kinds up here are poisonous."

"I wouldn't care whether it was poisonous or not," said Joyce, shuddering slightly. "If one *touched* me, I'd just die! I can't bear the *idea* of them! I thought you said, Chris, that there weren't any snakes on this island?"

"It wasn't *on* the island," said Christine teasingly, "but we very seldom do see one, and still less often do we touch one. — Oh, dear, there's Dad coming down from the study. I'll run up and finish the baskets as soon as I've dressed; don't you come, Joyce, I should think you'd be tired after all the hammering I heard this morning."

It took about an hour and a half to reach the beaver dam, and no one demurred this time when Professor Davidson produced a book for the after-dinner rest-hour.

"Captain Adams was telling me yesterday about the pageant they had at Penetanguishene," he said as he turned over the pages of the volume of Parkman. "Too bad we all missed it. I thought that, in order to refresh our memories, we might read the account of Champlain's discovery and exploration of this part of the world. Perhaps you didn't know, Joyce," he continued, turning to her, "that they celebrated the tercentenary of Champlain's arrival in Georgian Bay a few years ago. Ah, here's a bit about flies and mosquitoes which ought to comfort you, Peggy. They were evidently even worse three hundred years ago than they are now. Here is a page from the diary of one of the Recollet Fathers who followed Champlain into the Ottawa country;

" 'I confess this is the worst martyrdom I suffered in this country: hunger, thirst, weariness, and fever, are nothing to it. These little beasts not only persecute you all day, but at night they get into your eyes and mouth, crawl under your clothes, or stick their long stings through them, and make such a noise that it distracts your attention, and prevents you from saying your prayers.' "

"Same little beasts," said Dicky, rubbing his ankles, "though these are not so bad as the black flies were that summer we came up early."

"Ah, here's the chapter I wanted about Champlain's first voyage down this coast. Everybody comfortable?"

Perhaps it was because this part of the world was so new to Joyce, so remote from the life she had led in crowded cities and seaside resorts, so strange even now in this twentieth century, that the crossing by Parkman's magical bridge into the distant days of the seventeenth century was not a very difficult feat after all.

Had she not felt like a discoverer herself only a few days ago on Little Moon Island?

So, with great interest, she followed the story of Champlain's journey up the valley of the Ottawa: she sympathized with his trials and difficulties, his failures because of the treachery of lying guides, his persistent belief that a great body of water did indeed lie to the westward, and she rejoiced when he finally beheld the vast Mer-Douce or Freshwater Sea, Lake Huron.

"Before him," read Professor Davidson, "too far for sight, lay the spirit-haunted Manitoulins, and southward spread the vast bosom of the Georgian Bay. For more than a hundred miles, his course was along its eastern shores, among islets, countless as the sea-sands — an archipelago of rocks worn for ages by the wash of waves. . . . He seems to have landed a little west of the harbor of Penetanguishene."

"*Our* Penetanguishene?" asked Dicky. "Read that part over again, please, Daddy — I wasn't listening."

"Afterwards, son," answered Professor Davidson. "It wouldn't be fair to the others, would it? Listen to this about the Indian town of Otonacha, which stood near where Orillia is now. Remember, we passed through Orillia coming up to camp?"

Joyce drew a long breath, as Professor Davidson finished with a description of the meeting of Champlain and Father Le Caron who had preceded him by a short time and who, on the twelfth of August, 1615, in the presence of Champlain and his followers, celebrated the first Mass said in the country of the Hurons.

"Oh, wouldn't Le Caron be glad to see Champlain!" she cried.

"I don't wonder they made a pageant of it at Penetang," said Judith. "It's really a very dramatic scene, isn't it, Uncle Graeme? I *wish* we'd been there to see the pageant."

"So do I," chimed in Christine. "It must have been awfully pretty with that beautiful wooded shore as a background."

"Why shouldn't we have a pageant of our own?" said Judith, speaking slowly. "I believe we could get one up right here in Wahnanee — and charge everybody something, the spectators, I mean — and send the money to the Fresh Air Fund."

"What a *gorgeous* idea!" said Christine, her eyes shining. "We could make quite a lot, couldn't we — everybody in camps and from the hotels farther down the bay would come. Judy, darlin', you *do* have the most *brilliant* ideas! Daddy, don't you think it's a *dandy* scheme?"

"I don't believe I can go as far as 'dandy,'" said Professor Davidson, smiling at Christine's eager face, "and, as I dislike 'dandy,' almost as much as 'ripping,' which you got rid of last spring, I'd be obliged if you'd banish 'dandy' also. I wonder why you are so passionately attached to adjectives, Christine?"

"Oh, Daddy, don't you, *really?*"

"Yes, I do, *really*. Of course, it isn't worth doing at all unless it's done well — but I believe I know where I could get some costumes for you."

"Then there's our fancy-dress party!" cried Judith, clapping her hands. "We could all dress up as *habitants* or Indians, or ladies of the French Court. Let's have a scene at Versailles in the pageant — Champlain saying good-bye to the King—or something like that."

"Hurrah for Judy!" said Drew. "Hugh's a lazy beggar — wanted ideas for his party, and here you are ready to shower him with a regular bouquet of 'em."

Christine and Judith refused to accompany the others to see the beaver's house; they elected to stay with Mrs. Davidson who was reading under the pine-trees in her hammock; they had too much to talk about, they said; they were going to begin planning the pageant at once.

Joyce shared Peggy's excitement at the

prospect of seeing a beaver's house. Years before, she had read an account, in some magazine, of the ingenuity and skill of the little carpenter, of the cunningness with which he concealed his front door, and of the comfort and security of his dry upper chamber. A vague picture was in her mind of something like a partly submerged doll's house, with neat gabled roof and four square walls.

She shared, therefore, in Peggy's keen disappointment when they arrived at the pond and were asked to admire a mud bank, out of which protruded sticks of various sizes.

"But where's the house?" asked Peggy.

Joyce began to laugh at herself as she realized the absurdity of what she had been expecting, and tried to comfort Peggy who was being teased by Drew.

"It's very dull and uninteresting," said Peggy, turning a deaf ear to Drew. "I thought it was really a *house*, not a mud heap — and there's not a beaver to be seen."

She refused to be interested in the trees which had been so neatly felled by the small workmen, but was finally enticed by Dicky to join him in throwing pebbles into the water, in the hope that they might start a beaver.

Joyce, however, was glad to learn that the beaver's home *was* cleverly constructed, and that, after he had entered his hidden doorway, he could go upstairs to join his family in the dry sitting-room above, and enjoy twigs from his storeroom for supper.

Drew showed her, too, the extent of the dam and several little canals the beavers had constructed to use in floating down some of the sticks for it. These canals were probably just a widening of tiny openings already in the sand, but they showed the beaver's ingenuity and reasoning powers.

Drew and his father stayed only long enough to see Joyce and the children started on the trail again, and then took a short cut through a marshy bit of land back to the canoe, for Drew declared it was high time that they were off for Moose Lake where they meant to spend the night.

Left with the children, Joyce felt a little lonely and depressed, and, when a mean little thought took possession of her mind, she made no attempt to banish it. In fact, by the time they were nearing the camp, she had quite given herself up to miserable jealous imaginings.

Christine didn't really care for her — she just worshiped Judy Benson — anybody could see that — look how quickly Chris had said she would stay behind with Judy — she supposed they were talking, talking, talking about York Hill! She supposed Judy Benson thought she knew everything there was to know about pageants and dramatics! She needn't be so proud! But Chris just adored her — and wouldn't care a bit if she, Joyce, were to go home — perhaps she'd been here long enough, anyway!

It was a very dejected-looking Joyce who reached the camping-place, only to find the others already in the boats waiting impatiently.

"Hurry, hurry, slow-pokes!" cried Christine. "We'll go off without you."

And when Joyce and the children were seated, she added, "Judy wants us to go over and see some things she thinks will make costumes, and Mother wants to see Aunt Margaret — we're to stay the evening — won't it be fun?"

Then, noticing Joyce's hesitation, and the expression on her face, she added quickly, "Aren't you feeling well, Joy? Don't you want to come?"

"I'm not feeling awfully well," said Joyce, quickly seeing a means of escape. "No, nothing really, Aunt Fran, but I've a little bit of headache. I'd just sooner go on home if you don't mind." She forced a smile in Judith's direction.

"Let me go, too, Mum, please," pleaded Peggy. "I want to finish my story, and I can be company for Joyce."

A grubby little hand stole into Joyce's, and for a moment that unhappy young person felt something warm and alive again in her heart.

Mrs. Davidson gave her permission, and Judith and Christine said they were sorry, but their regret didn't prevent Judith from continuing a long account of a fancy-dress party they had last year at York Hill, and Christine's admiring comments and questions fanned Joyce's jealousy and ill-temper.

She was thoroughly miserable by the time she and Peggy reached Ken-jockety in the Veery, and she retired to a hammock with a book which she pretended to read, while Peggy curled up in Professor Davidson's big basket chair at the farthest end of the veranda, and devoured her story.

The story must have been even more than

usually absorbing, for when Joyce, who had decided that salad and rolls and fruit, and some of that nice cake she had made yesterday would be some slight mitigation of the miseries of unrequited friendship, called her to supper, Peggy pleaded for just five minutes more.

"All right," said Joyce, "five minutes. I'll time you." (Peggy was rather a dear; Joyce hadn't forgotten that affectionate little hand-clasp!)

Peggy answered the second summons very reluctantly, and ate her salad in silence.

"Agnes is in a terrible muddle," she replied to Joyce's inquiries as to the progress of the story. "You see, she has found out that some of the girls in her form are cheating, and she doesn't know what to do — she's the Form President — she wants to be *decent* about it — but, of course, it's hard to decide — those girls were just dreadful — did I tell you what they did on the first day of term?"

Joyce listened with one ear only. Christine would be drinking in stories of life at York Hill just now, and next year she'd be with Judith altogether, and she, Joyce, would be quite forgotten.

Peggy chattered on, and then looked longingly at her book.

"I'll wash the dishes and clear away, Joyce," she observed with a big sigh. "You got the supper ready — it was a nice supper, too."

Joyce, in the midst of her gloom, smiled.

"You run along and finish your book, honey. I'll only be a few minutes."

"How quiet the house is," thought Joyce as she dried the dishes. "Seems positively spooky, it's so still — no wonder, though, with Chris and Dicky both away. I don't believe there is any wind at all — the water is just like a mirror — I wonder what that is moving those bushes — a skunk maybe — or perhaps a snake — I *do* hope they won't wait until dark."

Just at that moment, as if the word "dark" were a signal, there was a sudden thud in the quiet kitchen as if something soft, yet heavy, had fallen from the open rafters to the floor.

Joyce did not cry out, but for some queer reason her heart seemed to miss a beat or two. Still standing with the plate and tea-towel in her hands, she moved her head very, very slowly, and looked over her shoulder.

Yes, of course! — she knew it. A large snake lay coiled on the floor four or five feet away!

For a moment, just one terror-filled moment, Joyce stood frozen with fear, and then bounded out of the door, still clutching towel and plate.

Once outside, she remembered that she was not alone; there was Peggy. Extraordinary, how comforting the thought of Peggy was — Peggy, who knew so much about the wild things and who feared nothing. Then like a lightning flash came the second thought. Aunt Frances had said that snakes must not be even *mentioned* to Peggy!

"What a good thing I didn't scream," thought Joyce. "She's still lost in her book. I'll just stay on the veranda, too, until Drew and Uncle Graeme come home — but they aren't coming home to-night! Oh, goodness me! I wonder where the horrible thing is now."

She peered through the screen-door, but, even as she shrank from seeing the wicked-looking eyes and the undulating curves, she hoped that she *would* see Mr. Snake just where he had fallen, for if the inner kitchen door were open, and he was not to be seen on the kitchen floor, why, then he might be *anywhere* — in the living-room, in the bedrooms, up on the rafters — ready to drop down again!

Joyce shivered at the thought of that soft thud, and then addressed herself sternly.

"You *were* a silly idiot, Joyce Virginia Hamilton, to rush away like that without looking to see where the — the brute — was going! Nice news to greet Chris and Aunt Fran *and* Peggy with! A snake *somewhere* in the house! Now pull yourself together, for — he must be found before it's too dark to hunt.

"Now, if I do find him — what'll I do? I could shut up the room, of course — but I'd better have something in case —"

Joyce didn't put it to herself more clearly than that, but she knew the unspoken fear at the back of her mind. Suppose the snake were to twist around her ankle, or drop from the rafter again. She didn't dare let her mind dwell on it, but hurriedly seized a broom, and a small hatchet which hung beside the stove, and, armed with these weapons, she began her search.

There were many likely lurking-places in the pantry, many tins and boxes to be gingerly pushed and poked by the broom-handle, and she had just convinced herself that there was no intruder in this room, at least, when Peggy appeared in the doorway.

"I ought to have helped you," said Peggy pentitently. "You've been ever so long. What are you doing? Aren't you coming out now?"

"No," answered Joyce. "Not just yet. You go on with your reading. And, Peggy, I'm hunting for — something I've lost — and don't come in unless I call you, please — because it's — a sort of — surprise."

"All right," said Peggy carelessly, her mind still intent on her heroine's adventures. "Call me when you want me."

Even in the midst of her misery Joyce gave a little chuckle at Peggy's ignorance of the tremendous double-meaning in the seemingly innocent expression — "a sort of surprise."

She tackled the sitting-room next, poking behind sofa-cushions and under chairs and couches, but still nothing was to be found.

Mrs. Davidson's bedroom was inspected, and Joyce was going into Peggy's room, when something like a shadow moved on the floor.

Quick as a flash, Joyce pinned the shadow to the floor with her broom, and then turned sick with repugnance as the shadow twisted and turned, and she met the hatred of two wickedly gleaming eyes and a hissing forked tongue.

She stood it for a moment or two, then looked away; the same instant her hold on the broom slackened, the snake, quick to feel the difference, twisted himself free, and was out of sight before Joyce could recover her hold.

This time Joyce gave up the chase. Her attempt at holding the snake had made her feel giddy and ill, and she went out to the veranda, angry with herself for having failed.

Peggy greeted her joyfully. "Got your surprise yet?"

Evidently Peggy expected something new and interesting in the way of fudge or cake.

"No," said Joyce. "I think I'll wait till the others come. Here's Sputter now. Let's go down and help them land."

"I'm afraid your head's worse, Joyce, dear," said Mrs. Davidson sympathetically as they went up the steps into the bungalow.

Peggy, fortunately, had stayed down at the wharf to say good-night to the minks, so that Joyce was able to give a brief account of her adventure. But she had not quite finished, when, suddenly, to Mrs. Davidson's astonishment, she darted through the door into the bedroom and slammed down the cover of a trunk which stood open.

"He's in your trunk, Aunt Fran," Joyce whispered tensely. "I saw him stick up his head."

Mrs. Davidson looked slightly bewildered.

"Are you sure, Joyce?" she asked. "Seems almost too —"

"I know," interrupted Joyce. "Sort of melodramatic, and like a movie. But he's in there all right."

She felt as if a tremendous burden had been lifted from her. The snake was Aunt Fran's responsibility now!

Mrs. Davidson looked meditatively at the trunk, but she made no movement to open the lid. Joyce was surprised; she had a vague notion that Aunt Fran would immediately open the trunk and dispatch the snake.

"If he's there, he can't get out, but — I think we'd better move the trunk out on to the veranda. We'll not do anything until morning," said Mrs. Davidson.

Christine and Joyce lifted out the little trunk after Peggy was safely in her own room, and then, tired out by the day's events, betook themselves to bed.

Christine as usual talked unceasingly. To-night she had four thrilling subjects, Hugh's party, the pageant, the great and glorious York Hill, and Joyce's heroism in tackling the snake.

Joyce was too tired to interrupt, but, when Christine's stock of adjectives was at last exhausted and she came through the curtain to say good-night, Joyce protested.

"You mustn't think I was brave," she said. "I was scared stiff — and then I wobbled so that he was able to slip out from under the broom. I really failed, and Aunt Fran has made me feel ashamed, she's said so many nice things to me."

Joyce might be ashamed, but she looked very happy, nevertheless.

"That's real bravery," said Christine sagely, brushing her smooth goldy hair. "I don't know how you did it all. Ugh — makes me shiver to think of it twisting around the broom. Do you know what we planned this afternoon, Joyce?"

Christine threw her arms impulsively around her room-mate.

"We decided that we were going to concentrate on you to make you *want* to come to York Hill and then on your father to make him let you come. Oh, Joy, do! It truly is just *the* school. You'd love the winter sports, and we'd have such good times together."

"If Father is still away, I'd like nothing better," was the prompt reply.

She was surprised afterwards when she realized how inevitable her answer had seemed. Do without Christine and Peggy and Drew and Aunt Fran! It was unthinkable. And she hadn't been aware of their existence a month ago!

Next morning no one seemed to be in a hurry to tackle the problem of what to do with the snake.

"If only Dad or Drew were here," said Christine, as she and Joyce worked in the kitchen. "Mother will be afraid to trust Dicky; he might let it escape, and, anyway, I expect he'll have to take Peggy off somewhere."

Christine was right in her surmise, for Mrs. Davidson said casually at the breakfast-table:

"By the way, Dicky, didn't I hear you and Peggy speak about wanting to practice doubles with the Mortons? I want to send a note to Mrs. Morton this morning, so, as soon as your work is done, you and Peggy might go over."

"All right," said Dicky. "We're going to get busy right now for the regatta. Tip says the first prize for the most points for our lot is a silver watch; he says he's going to get it. You just watch me take it away from him; he can't steer any more'n — a porcupine."

"May we take our bathing-suits, Mum?" asked Peggy anxiously. "Margy and I want to practice swimming. She can beat me all hollow at diving; it takes me so long to come up after I plunge that I can't catch up to her. Please, Mummy — please!"

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Davidson, smiling at the eager little face. "I'm sure I can trust you to do just as if you were here. Not more than twenty minutes, remember; take the hunting-watch with you."

After breakfast Dicky and Peggy fell upon the chores with such vigor that the living-room and verandas were tidied, wood carried in, and water pumped in about half the usual time. Then away the two went to spend the morning at the Mortons'.

Even then Mrs. Davidson didn't seem to be in a hurry to open the trunk.

"We could wait till Father comes home; he may be here before evening; but it would look rather silly and the snake — if he's there — may spoil some of the white clothes."

Finally, when it appeared probable that the children would soon return, she decided that they had better tackle him.

"Let's lift the trunk out on to the rocks," she suggested, "so that, in case he should escape, he can't get back into the house."

Christine had come armed with the hatchet, Joyce had a broom, and Mrs. Davidson was carrying an umbrella with a curved handle.

Christine giggled at sight of this last.

"What are you going to do with Dad's best umbrella, Mother, darlin'?" she cried. "Are you going to whack Mr. Snake good and proper if he puts up his head to hiss, or do you mean to hook him out of the trunk with the handle? I shouldn't advise you to do that, you know, he might curl up it. Oh, Mummy, you *do* look so serious. Can you feel him twining around your ankle?"

"I *feel* serious, Miss Impertinence; the umbrella is to hook out the clothes. Who's going to open the trunk?"

The three assassins looked at one another solemnly, and each one said *she* would do it, but it was very clear that no one was anxious for the honor.

"I'll tell you what," cried Christine. "Let's get some chairs and put them around in a circle with a little pile of stones on each one, ready to throw at him, and then I'll poke the lid open."

She and Joyce quickly brought the stones and the chairs, and the three mounted them, although Mrs. Davidson laughingly declared that she had never felt so foolish since the time, years ago, when on her first visit to Muskoka she had tried to put salt on a chipmunk's tail in order to tame him.

Christine hooked the umbrella-handle under the lock and threw back the lid.

The three held their breath! But no ugly hissing head appeared. Only Peggy's best white frock lay daintily clean and fresh on the top of the folded clothes.

"Give me Peggy's dress carefully," said Mrs. Davidson. "I don't want to have to press it again."

Joyce, meanwhile, was poking out some of the clothes with her broom-handle, and soon the tray of the trunk was empty.

"Well, no snake could possibly be in there," said Christine, jumping down from her perch and seizing the tray. "Nothing but a fishworm could wiggle down through the cracks at the side." And she began recklessly to put in her hands and pull out the clothes.

"I saw him," said Joyce positively; "and as he couldn't get *out*, he must be *in:* do be careful, Chris."

"Why, here's my white serge skirt, right at the bottom," announced Christine pouncing on it. "I was hunting —"

There was a sudden hissing sound, a frightened cry, the trunk cover was banged shut, and Christine was back on her chair, all in the twinkling of an eye.

"A great big fellow!" gasped Christine, "curled up in my clean white skirt! Ugh, the horrid thing! Where's a stone?"

She reached for a missile, and the useful trunk-opener at the same time.

"Wait a minute, Christine," said her Mother. "Supposing we miss him when he slips out? They go very fast, you know."

"What's up?" called Drew's clear voice behind them. "What giddy stunt are you rehearsing?"

The three were off their chairs at the first sound, and Mrs. Davidson tried, but quite unsuccessfully, to appear her usual serene dignified self, pleased to see her menfolk back.

Christine rapidly sketched the situation, and Drew leaned against a tree helpless with laughter.

"Mother, I'll give you anything I possess, my precious red tie, my best fishing-rod, my camera, if you'll get back on that chair long enough to let me snap you." He held out his camera persuasively, but Mrs. Davidson, whose cheeks were pink, refused to be bribed.

"Get the horrid thing away quickly, Drew, dear," she said. "I don't want Peggy to see it, or hear about it, and the children may be home any minute now — we waited too long. Where is your father?"

"Dad's getting ice for the fish we caught," answered Drew, opening the lid of the trunk. "Now don't squeal, Chris, come and look, and you, too, Joyce. There's nothing to be afraid of."

If he wanted to bring Joyce promptly, he knew how to do it. She lifted her head at that word "afraid," and was beside the trunk in a moment.

Mrs. Davidson gave one hasty glance at the contents of the trunk, and went down to meet her husband.

"A fox snake," said Drew, poking the white skirt aside. "Perfectly harmless, poor fellow, and a beauty! Look at those markings!"

Joyce looked, but could feel no enthusiasm for the intricate diamond-shaped patterning on the snake's back. Instead, as she saw his wicked-looking eyes, she turned white and shuddered. Christine gave a little stifled cry.

"Now, look here," said Drew emphatically. "You're both being perfectly silly. I'm ashamed of you, Chris. I s'pose I've got to kill him. If you could just take hold of him after he's dead in a good firm grasp, you'd never be frightened again of a snake."

"Good gracious me! No!" cried Christine. "I'd die before I'd touch him. And I've got to run right now, and put the fire on for luncheon."

Joyce stood silently a little way off, pretending to pick blueberries, but in reality watching Drew seize the snake by the tail, whirl him around through the air, crack his head smack against the rock, and throw him down by the old ice-house.

"There, he'll be safe until after luncheon," said Drew. "I want to fill the refrigerator first. I'll bury him afterwards, unless you'd like to get up a first-class funeral, Joyce? We might let you be the undertaker."

"More in your line," she returned. "I'll be chief mourner. You're just in time; there come Peggy and Dick now."

Drew went off to wash his hands, and, moved by a sudden impulse, Joyce ran swiftly over the rocks in the direction in which Drew had thrown the snake.

Yes, there he lay — ugly — detestably ugly! How could *any one* admire *anything* in him!

Joyce drew a long breath. It was hateful, hateful, to be afraid of anything! If a moment's misery or torture could make it impossible!

She stooped; the snake twisted in a muscular spasm, and then lay still again. Joyce set her lips, grasped the snake firmly in her right hand, threw him with all her might some ten feet away, and ran back to the bungalow as if pursued, quite oblivious to the fact that Drew, who had decided to bury the snake first, after all, was an interested observer of this last act in the little drama.

He had come into view just as Joyce had stooped, and an odd impulse of instinctive delicacy warned him that he must not betray his presence.

"Well —!" he said slowly, when Joyce had disappeared. "Girls are — the dickens! They'll holler and shiver and fuss with a bit of a snake twenty feet away from 'em, and then — do this! Sheer grit, that's what Joyce is — and Chris, too, when it comes to a pinch. But queer — gee, they're queer!"

CHAPTER VIII

UPS AND DOWNS

JUDITH'S suggestion for a pageant was submitted to a gathering of all the Wahnanee young people and received with great applause. Various plans were discussed, committees named, and, as the time for preparation was all too short, Professor Davidson was invited to tell them something about the historical background that very evening.

His brief address had the unlooked-for result of shortening considerably their first schemes for a programme.

Christine had been enthusiastically supporting the plan for a French Court scene as well as for one of the departure of Champlain from Quebec, but this, it appeared, was because she thought Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were gracing the French throne at that time, and, although she did not aspire to be Marie Antoinette, still — a French Court lady's costume would be becoming and picturesque.

Great was her dismay to find that Marie

Antoinette did not appear on the scenes for some one hundred and fifty years or more, and that the young King Louis XIII had not yet been married when Champlain set out on the voyage which was to end in the discovery of Lake Huron; and, moreover, that the queen dowager was the wicked Marie de Medici. There were difficulties, too, in the way of representing properly a farewell scene at Quebec, and Professor Davidson advised them to undertake only the landing of Champlain in Georgian Bay, and his farewell to the Indians. This, he said, done well, would take all the time they had to spare.

Christine and Charlotte looked at each other dolefully as this last was decided upon.

"Don't forget what your father said about Elizabethan England, Chris," said Joyce comfortingly. "Elizabethan costumes are lovely."

Christine beamed, and said quickly, "Hurrah — I didn't take that in altogether — of course Dad *did* say that Queen Elizabeth was reigning in England just before this. I was so disappointed about those Louis XVI costumes, I couldn't think of anything else."

"Shouldn't have any difficulty about costumes for the party," observed Hugh, who had joined the group. "Mother thinks we'd better not have any Indian costumes, so we'll have to draw on England and France."

"But if Queen Elizabeth was dead when Champlain came down this bay, then we can't include her, can we?" said Alison, who was very literal,

"What *was* the date of King James's accession?" asked Charlotte. "Let's ask your father, Chris."

But Professor Davidson had already gone up the river in the red canoe, for he was hoping for an hour or two's fishing toward sundown.

"Doesn't anybody know?" asked Christine mournfully.

"1603, I think," said Noel. "I had to learn all the dates of the English kings when I was a youngster. I tell you, I'll slip over and get a history book. I've got a European history up here. You people settle the cast for the pageant while I'm gone, and then we can choose characters for the party afterwards."

Noel was back long before the others were ready for him, but finally Hugh was prevailed upon to take the part of Champlain, Ted Morton that of Father Le Caron, and to the other boys were assigned the various rôles of Frenchmen and Indians in the little scene.

Noel was then bombarded with questions, and although no one would tell what his or her costume was to be, leading questions as to Shakespeare's, Catherine de Medici's, Mary, Queen of Scots', and Pilgrim Fathers' dates, gave clues as to the desires of certain members of the camp. Any historical character who lived within twenty-five years of 1615 was to be eligible.

"Cousin Edith has a dress which I think will do for me," said Joyce as they went home for supper. "Yes, I'm sure it will — great luck for me, not having to make one. I'll ask her to wire Mrs. Travers to unpack it and send it straight up here, and that will give me more time for the Indian girls' costumes; it will take ages to fringe enough brown cotton."

"Do you think you'll get the dress in time?" asked Judith. "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip,' you know, and it's a long way from here to Boston."

"Nearly two weeks until the party," said Joyce, rather coldly. "That's heaps of time, I should think." She didn't like Judith's tone. Was it, or was it not, a shade patronizing?

Did Judith think she was the *only* person who could organize anything successfully? Well, she would see!

"I think I'll take a leaf out of your book, Joyce, if you've no objections," said Judith, as Sputter ceased "sputting" and drew up at Ken-jockety's wharf. "I've such millions of things to do that I believe I'll borrow a costume, too. Aunt Nell offered me a Mary Stuart one when she was here last week, but I thought I'd go as a Breton peasant. However, I won't decide until Nancy comes. She'll be here to-morrow — seems too good to be true. Come over to-morrow evening, won't you? I do want you to meet her."

Joyce and Christine were kneeling on the rocks in front of the chalet a few mornings later rinsing their washing — every one did some of his or her personal laundry at Ken-jockety — when Mrs. Davidson came down the path with the living-room curtains in her arms.

"Ready just in a moment, Mumsy — there, that's my second pair of stockings — better count yours, Joyce, little things are apt to float away. I found one of Charlotte's stockings caught against our dock one morning; it had gayly sailed across."

"Talking of hosiery makes me think of Champlain's Court costume that Uncle Graeme read us about yesterday," said Joyce, plunging in a handful of handkerchiefs, and giving a fair imitation of the working of an electric washer by swishing the said kerchiefs vigorously through the water. "I wish Drew had been nominated to be Champlain: he'd have looked nice in ruffles, sky-blue hose and knee-breeches, and a hat with a plume."

"He was nominated," said Christine promptly, "but he has so many things to look after as chairman that he wouldn't accept — besides, it wouldn't look well, would it, for the chairman to be the chief character? He's going to be one of the Indian braves. Mother's making him a headdress of those heron feathers we found the day — all right, Mummy, I'm coming."

Christine fled up to the chalet, and when Joyce entered a little later she found her arrayed in the curtains — that is to say, Mrs. Davidson was pinning them on to an old muslin frock that Christine had donned.

"I think we can manage it," Mrs. Davidson was saying; "the pattern will give an effect of brocade — I have had to cut up one of the cushion covers for the tight little bodice, and you must have a big ruff — I'll leave that to you and Joyce to manufacture. It's a blessing that the skirts of the sixteenth century were so simple. Have you heard from your Cousin Edith yet, Joyce?"

"No, Aunt Fran," answered Joyce. "I ought to have a letter to-night. Is there anything I can do to help while I wait for Peggy? We are going over to the Huntleys' to give Nora an extra practice — she's very stupid and so clumsy — I can't see why she's in the dance at all — she hasn't a notion of what rhythm means."

"I'll give you a seam to sew in a moment, thank you," said Mrs. Davidson, surveying Christine from another angle and altering a line not to her liking. "And about Nora — I hope you'll be especially patient with her, dear; you see she was very ill when a little tot, and she's not been able to keep up with the other children, never taken part in the Christmas entertainments at the kindergarten or anything of that sort. It will mean a *great* deal, to Nora's mother, and to me, Joy, if Nora can take part with the other children."

"Then Nora shall practice every day under my personal supervision, Aunt Fran," said Joyce firmly. "I'm sure we can help her — and even if she does do it wrongly — why, who cares?"

But Mrs. Davidson knew that Joyce would care — care very much; she intended that that little dance should be just as perfect as possible; she also knew that Joyce meant that mothers were too precious to be hurt if she could help it, and the look of appreciation that went from the calm blue eyes to the brilliant gray ones was full of motherly understanding and tenderness.

"Gray Goose arrive!" yelled Dicky suddenly from behind the pine-tree beside the chalet, and, delightedly observing their start of surprise, he ended with a war-whoop which was intended to live up to a Fenimore Cooper hero's best.

"I'm a Pottawattamie!" he yelled. "Out of the way of my tomahawk!"

Joyce and Christine covered their ears, and flinched before the swinging tomahawk in a fashion highly gratifying to the brave.

"Ask Judy to come up here, please," said Christine, "and, Dick, you can't be a Pottawattamie in the pageant; they didn't live here. You'll have to be an Ojibway or some sort of Huron."

"Won't," said Dicky. "Won't." He war-whooped again.

"Mother," said Christine earnestly as her mother fitted on the bodice, "he can't, can he?"

"Why not?" said Mrs. Davidson serenely, stepping back to get a view of her work. "I wish these curtains had been a little longer, but then we didn't count on doing this with them. I don't suppose the Pottawattamies dressed very differently from the Hurons. I'm certain people won't know the difference unless we tell them, and for some reason or other the name seems to attract him. It *is* a nice word, isn't it? I could rather fancy being a Pottawattamie myself."

"But Daddy said we were to be as historically accurate as possible," objected Christine. "And Dicky's getting awfully rude, Mum. He just seems to try to be noisy. I believe he *jars* on Judy and Nancy."

"Possibly he does," said Dicky's mother, laughing at Christine's solemn countenance. "He *jars* on me sometimes, too. I rather wish the pageant didn't have to have Indians in it. It's much harder for little boys —" (Dicky's voice is heard outside again.) "No, Dicky, don't go up past the study, Daddy's busy — *no*, you can't have anything to eat. You've just finished breakfast — well, tighten your belt, that's the way Indian braves did — and, Dicky, they were usually quiet; remember how they crept about? It was only occasionally they war-whooped."

Dicky, who had been entreating his mother for "just one cooky," went off toward the boat-house with exaggerated precautions for silence, and with his next whoop was able to obtain a frightened start from Judith and Nancy who had not seen him coming.

Judith ran lightly down the path to the chalet; she looked like the bearer of good news, and indeed she could hardly wait to unfold a thrilling plan:

"I wanted to get Nancy out of the way while we discussed it, so as to surprise her. Dicky has taken her to see a nest. She's just had a letter from her brother Jack, saying that he and his chum, Tom, who've been up in Muskoka, are planning to leave Bala next Wednesday or Thursday and paddle down the river.

We meant to take Nancy for a two or three days' camping-trip while she was here, and Dad wants to try the fishing in Little Bass Lake, and this seems a good opportunity to go up and meet the boys, and Mother says, 'Yes, if Aunt Frances, will let Chris and Joyce go.' Aunt Fran, you couldn't possibly say no!"

"Oh, Mum, of course you'll just have to say yes! You know we wanted Joyce to have a camping expedition, and I'm simply *crazy* to go."

Christine began to dance about the room flinging her arms about Judith, and her mother, then whirling Joyce about to the undoing of some of her draperies, which, being held with pins only, were not sufficiently secure for violent exercise.

"How would you like it, Joyce?" asked Mrs. Davidson, after she had captured Christine, and commanded her to keep still on pain of having to hold the pins in her mouth.

"I'd love it," said Joyce fervently; "that is, if you think I wouldn't be a bother — I know a tenderfoot is not always a welcome addition to a camping party."

"I don't think we need consider you a tenderfoot now," said Mrs. Davidson, smiling.

"Drew pronounced you 'a very decent hand with a paddle' the other day, didn't he? That is praise from him. Well, Judith — Christine, don't you begin to jiggle again, or these pins will certainly stick into you — I'll talk it over with Uncle Graeme, but I don't see now any reason why they can't go."

"Goody!" shouted the irrepressible Christine. "Let's go right up and get Dad now, Judy — I'll never forgive him if —"

"Not until twelve o'clock," warned her mother. "How large a party do you plan, Judith?"

"We hoped Chris, Joyce, Uncle Graeme, and Drew would come, and Dad and Nancy and myself. That would mean three canoes. We could go halfway up, and then Dad and Uncle Graeme could have a day's fishing. We'd meet the boys and come home the third day. If the pageant is next Tuesday as we plan, then we could leave for Muskoka, say, Thursday, and be home Saturday evening."

"And then the regatta comes the following Thursday," chanted Christine. "What a gorgeous two weeks we are going to have! Mother, are you through fitting me? Let's make a list of what we'll have to take, Judy, until Nancy comes back."

Joyce got pencil and paper while Christine changed.

"Let's each make a list of what we think we'll need," suggested Judith. "Then we can check each other's omissions."

They wrote busily for a few minutes; Nancy appeared, and the plan must be explained to her and her joyful consent obtained.

A burst of laughter greeted their first glance at the three lists: they were each headed, "Bacon."

"Well, it's no wonder — I can't imagine camping without bacon, can you?" said Christine.

"Or coffee," said Nancy. "I was once on a trip where tiny little red ants got into the bag of coffee the first day out. We almost turned back; Father never ceased to moan about it; he said camping and large mugs of coffee were synonymous."

"We'd better have two bags of coffee," said practical Christine. "Drew had a lot of little cotton bags for supplies in his camping-kit. Joyce, you haven't seen that kit yet, have you? It's too sweet for words: all the pans and things fit into each other in the cunningest fashion, and the salt-shaker has salt in one end and pepper in the other, and everything is made of aluminum."

"Including the salt, I suppose," said Judith severely. "Pinch her, please, Joy, if she starts again. Where were we? Bread, salt, figs, and dates — that's a good idea, Chris. I'll bring some salad dressing and a tongue, and I'll get Dad to bring a first-aid kit, so you needn't bother about that."

There was a little more discussion as to what they had better wear, and what bedding and sleeping-tents would be needed, and then Judith and Nancy got into the Gray Goose and headed for Long Point.

Christine went promptly back to the chalet to sew on her costume, but Joyce sat lazily on the wharf watching the Gray Goose puffing her way importantly across the bay.

She had ever so many things to think about: this expedition to Muskoka would be fun; Nancy Nairn seemed to be a dear — how happy Judy looked! She should have asked Judy about the costumes for the little Indian maidens — perhaps Aunt Fran could help with them. What a trump Aunt Fran was! If Aunt Fran wanted her, as well as Christine, to be patient with Dicky, then she would be, that was all there was to it — though he *was* provoking; she'd be an *angel* to Dicky if Aunt Fran wished it!

This high resolve lasted for the rest of the morning.

After luncheon Christine took her shopping list to consult with her mother about one or two items, and Joyce decided that she had time, before the supply-boat was due, to iron a couple of middy blouses while the irons were hot.

Dicky was groaning loudly because he still had to prepare the vegetables for dinner.

Joyce disliked ironing; she had done so little that she felt awkward and slow about it; and it was hot, very hot, in the kitchen. However, the blouses had to be done, so she began at once, and soon had one ready to put out on the veranda in the sun.

Dicky continued to complain bitterly.

"Cricky! I hate doing new potatoes! And carrots!"

He raised his voice and called in his loudest, most piercing tones, "How many bunches of carrots, Chris? Three? Aw — no fair — they're huge bunches!"

He threw the last potato with such violence into the pot of water that he splashed the freshly ironed middy.

Joyce felt a sudden wave of anger.

"Stop that!" she said crossly to Dicky. "Why didn't you look where you were throwing that water? Now I'll have to iron it again."

Dicky didn't like being scolded any more than he liked doing potatoes.

"Sorry," he said perfunctorily; and then he added impishly, looking from the bunch of carrots in his hand up to Joyce's ruddy hair. "Sorry — carrots!"

Ordinarily Joyce would have grinned with him, or have ignored his remark, but the innocent little word was seemingly like a match to gunpowder now. Her eyes and cheeks blazed, and she seized Dicky's shoulder in a grasp that hurt.

"Aw, stop it!" he cried, wriggling himself free. "You needn't be so cross, if you *have* got red hair. I was just going to say it wasn't very polite of Chris to have carrots again this week, so as to remind you of your hair."

"Leave my hair alone," said Joyce in an angry voice.

"Dicky," called Mrs. Davidson from within, "come here a moment."

Dicky, looking defiant, disappeared into the living-room.

Joyce returned to the kitchen with her wet middy, where she could hear Mrs. Davidson's low tones and then Dicky's piercing whisper.

"Well, I ain't sorry. What'd she get so mad for? She gets mad at anything. Well, her hair *is* red — fierce red."

Joyce thumped the iron down on the poor unoffending middy with such vigor that she did not hear any more, but evidently Mrs. Davidson had succeeded in making her side of the matter clear, for, as Joyce left the kitchen to take her clean clothes down to the chalet, Dicky opened the screen-door for her, and said awkwardly and all in one breath, "I beg your pardon, like me to carry 'em down? Chris says to please go down to the wharf, Charlotte's there."

"Don't mention it," said Joyce in icy tones. "No, thank you. I'll take them myself, and I'm not coming down to the wharf nor going to the supply-boat."

Dicky looked aghast. Imagine being so "mad" as to miss the delights of the Ojibway's ice-cream cones!

Joyce threw her clean clothes into the chalet and hurried along the shore away from the wharf.

She was almost running now as if trying to get away from her own angry self, and, as the way was not smooth at this end of the island, she was enraged even by the rocks over which she occasionally stumbled. On the western side of the island, the granite was twisted into odd shapes, and great boulders were piled up at the water's edge.

She was still walking swiftly, nearer the shore, jumping from rock to rock, and beginning, at the bottom of her heart, to be ashamed of her childishness, when one of the stones on which she stepped, turned over, and, so suddenly that she could hardly believe it to be true, she found herself in the water.

She gave a startled cry of surprise, rolled over in the water, climbed out on the other side of the shallow basin-like depression in the rock, hesitated for a moment whether to rage or laugh, and decided on the latter. Her ringing laughter was answered by a rustling in the bushes near by, a call of "Who's there?" and the unlooked-for appearance of Drew.

"What's up?" he called. "Where's Chris?"

"At the wharf with Charlotte," said Joyce, still laughing. "Nothing's up, but *I'm down* — rolled right down into that bath there."

"Gave me a start," said Drew, sitting down and fanning himself with his hat. "I thought you were a loon at first, and then I thought one of the kids had fallen in."

Joyce laughed again.

"Thanks! So that's what my silvery laughter sounds like. But I *was* a loon, just exactly that. I was *fearfully* wrathy with Dicky; he said my hair was red — and it *is* — and I rushed out and didn't look where I was going. Wish I didn't have such a rotten temper, but I've always had it, and I s'pose I always shall. Cousin Edith says it just naturally goes with hair like mine."

Drew didn't laugh as she had expected, and Joyce added: "But I get over it quickly — especially if it's washed out." She began to laugh again, as she tried to wring the water out of her streaming clothes.

"Aren't you going shopping with Chris?" asked Drew. "It must be nearly boat-time."

"No," said Joyce; "that is, yes, if I have time to change these wet rags."

She felt a curious reluctance to join Christine and Charlotte, Aunt Frances and Dicky, down at the wharf. But it was made very easy for her. No one seemed to have remembered the happenings of the last hour.

They had a merry time at the boat. There were ever so many delightful details to be discussed and arranged for the pageant, the camping-trip, and the regatta.

Christine chattered all the way home and later at the dinner-table, and only ceased her happy scattering of superlatives and exclamations to bury herself in "A Tale of Two Cities," which thrilling story entirely satisfied her romantic soul.

The rest of the family set off in Sputter to visit the Kingstons, but Joyce elected to stay with Christine and read. But never had she felt less like reading. She took her book down to the wharf and settled herself comfortably in a canvas chair, but after reading the first page twice and then, finding that she hadn't an idea what it was all about, she flung the book down, jumped to her feet, and looked around her for something to do. She longed for a swift canter on Bijou, or a run in Piggy's racing car. She stretched her arms out to the breeze which was lifting her hair.

"Next time I come up here I'll have my

own private aeroplane, see if I don't," she said aloud. "Wouldn't it be *splendid!* I've *got* to learn to fly!"

Her eye fell on Comet rocking restlessly in the breeze.

Like a flash she jumped down and began to put up the sail.

"Better call Chris," said a tiny voice deep down within her.

"Uncle Graeme said I could manage Comet now."

"Yes, but you know that he didn't intend. . ."

But Joyce was busy adjusting the tiller and paid no heed.

Away she went!

She held on to the sheet as if a hurricane might at any moment blow her out to the open, but Comet slid lightly and gracefully over the top of the waves toward the Whalebacks. So she released her hold on sheet and tiller, and began to enjoy herself thoroughly.

The waves were bigger as she neared the Whalebacks, for here there was an open stretch of water where the wind had a good sweep. Joyce's eyes sparkled, and her cheeks glowed.

"I'd like to sing the 'Marseillaise' or something like that," she said to herself. "Perhaps it might upset Comet. I shall never want to ride in a motor-boat again. Whoa, Comet, not quite so fast."

Then she saw that the wet black sides of the Whalebacks were looming very large and near; they seemed to have grown monstrous since the last time she was out. Suppose Comet refused to obey when she gave the sign for "About"!

But rudder and sail worked together like magic, and away went Comet skimming over the bay again.

"Better head for Ken-jockety now," said the patient little voice within. "You've had a nice sail, and no harm done."

But Joyce was full of triumph and pride. She had heard Christine say only yesterday that the channel between the Huntleys' island and the Mortons' point was difficult to navigate, because it was so long and narrow — one had to make so many tacks.

"*Eh bien!*" said Joyce to herself. "Comet and I are going home by way of the Mortons' channel — I saw how Uncle Graeme did it the other day — and then I shall say casually to Chris, 'Did you say the Mortons' channel was difficult? *I* didn't find it so.'"

The color was fading from the sky, and when Comet turned her back on the sunset in order to enter the channel, Joyce looked around in surprise. The waves were much larger here in the channel than she could have imagined with such a wind. Big, sullen, dark waves, they were. A tiny wish that she had gone home by the easier route was sternly repressed by a Joyce who was keenly alert now, and ready to put into practice all that her teachers had shown her.

She headed for a little crooked pine-tree that grew down on the cliff in a tiny crevice, and made her first tack in safety.

Now for that big boulder. That surely was Uncle Graeme's second mark.

Comet turned obediently, but as she neared the rock she wavered suddenly, the sail flapping uncertainly; Joyce set her lips, gave the tiller an extra hard pull, and around came Comet once more.

Now *where* was the third mark? As far as she could remember, it was a streak of white quartz in the granite cliff. It should be there — no, a little farther on. Well, she'd *have* to tack now.

But again Comet wavered, again the sail

flapped, again Joyce gave an extra hard pull on the rudder, which evoked this time only a pronounced wavering in Comet. Another pull. They were drifting now with the big waves, drifting steadily toward those big cruel-looking rocks.

Frantically Joyce searched her mind. Had she forgotten any rule or precept?

No; she could think of nothing she had left undone.

"Well, if Comet *is* smashed, and I'm drowned, I'm sorry about not having permission — but I've had a *gorgeous* time trying!" And with the thought, *bang* went Comet against the rocks, *bang* went the center-board against a reef, and the tiller fell useless in her hand.

Joyce was helpless now. No, not quite. She seized a paddle which was in its place at the side of the boat, and tried to keep Comet from the rocks. Every ounce of muscle and skill she had she used, but she soon saw that it was a losing fight.

It was dark now. The lights far off in the cottages were twinkling like friendly little stars. That must be the Mortons' cottage over there. She would have to call for help. But, *oh*, how she hated to do it! And they probably would not hear her!

With the thought came a sudden sickening realization of the anxiety she was causing Christine and the others — they would probably be home by now.

"I *ought* to be drowned," she thought despairingly. "Why *didn't* I think!"

Just then, to her enormous relief, she heard the "Chug, chug, chug" of a motor-boat, and, as it came close, the engine stopped, and Hugh's voice called, "Hi, there! Anybody want a tow?"

"Thanks very much," said Joyce in a voice which she tried to make casual. "The breeze is rather uncertain, and squally in here, isn't it?"

Hugh paddled the big boat alongside, jumped aboard, hauled in the sail and secured the rudder, made Comet fast to the towline, helped Joyce into the Arrow, and jumped in after her, all to the accompaniment of a ceaseless flow of talk.

Joyce laughed gayly at his nonsense, but her heart sank as she saw the two lanterns bobbing about at Ken-jockety's wharf.

"I thought I had a bad moment in the

channel," she said to herself, "but this is going to be much worse."

"Everybody all right and quite happy," called Hugh as they neared the wharf. "Hello, Drew! Did you get that birch bark?"

Professor Davidson helped Joyce out and she spoke to him first of all.

"I'm sorry, Uncle Graeme," she said slowly, "sorrier than I can say — I knew I ought not to go alone."

Then she turned to the others.

"Chris, I'm frightfully sorry — Aunt Fran, I hope you haven't been home long — I can't make any excuses — there's just no use trusting me."

She hated to meet Aunt Fran's eyes, those eyes which had been so full of motherly understanding and love that very morning. Was it only this morning that she had been promising herself to be patient with Dicky? — and — oh, what was the use of trying!

She looked up, her own eyes so dark with misery, that Aunt Fran, being an understanding person, put her arms around the tense young figure, cuddled the red-gold head under her chin, and said softly:

"It was wrong of you to go without telling

Chris, dear — mercifully she was lost in her book most of the time, but, oh, we're so *glad* to have you home again safe and sound."

Joyce relaxed in those loving arms. "Mothers," she said to herself fiercely, "mothers are — are — *gorgeous!*"

CHAPTER IX

A PAGEANT AND A PARTY

JOYCE gave a little groan as Christine tried to waken her by giving her a slight shake.

"What's the matter, Joy?" asked Christine, anxiously bending over her. Surely Joyce couldn't be ill on the very day of the pageant!

Joyce rubbed her eyes and sat up.

"So it isn't raining," she observed, blinking at the pools of sunlight on the floor.

"Are you sure you are all right?" protested Christine. "You groaned and looked so unhappy."

"I *was* unhappy," said Joyce solemnly. "I thought it was pouring rain, and the dye was running out of the children's dresses, and they looked *so* bedraggled and funny, and nobody was keeping step with anybody else, and slow little Nora was dancing a Highland fling all by herself — if that isn't enough to make anybody groan!"

"I thought at first that perhaps you were ill, or that maybe you were feeling badly about your dress not coming last night," said Christine, pulling the curtain and getting into her bathing-suit.

"You know very well that I'm never ill," said Joyce, springing out of bed, and seizing *her* bathing-suit. "It's a nuisance about the costume. Perhaps it will come down by this morning's boat from Parry Sound, but if it doesn't, I shan't worry about *that*. I've a number of other things to worry about, if I've really decided to include worrying in my morning's programme. Oh, Chris! what an exquisite morning! — so blue and golden and 'heavenly fair.' One, two — ouch, it's cold!"

"I'll take you over in Sputter to see if the Keewah brought your parcel, Joy," said Drew as they went down to the boat-house after breakfast. "But I don't know whether I can come away immediately, we have a good many last things to do — the wigwams have to be set up — and —"

"Thank you, Drew," said Joyce. "I know you are frightfully busy, and so is everybody. If you'll look to see if the Keewah brought me a parcel from Boston, and bring it home at luncheon if it's there, I'll be much obliged. We're going to have a rehearsal with the children here, and Nora will need some extra coaching, I expect. If my costume doesn't come, I'll go in my Japanese kimono with a paper flower in my hair. I'm sure Mrs. Dawson and Hugh will forgive me when they know I tried to go suitably attired as Priscilla Alden."

"So that's what you were planning," said Christine, greatly interested. "You've given yourself away now."

"Not 'suitably,' I should say," teased Drew. "I can't imagine you as Priscilla, nor yet as a Japanese lady — Queen Elizabeth now — that would be much more in keeping with — the color of your hair."

"And temperament — shall we say?" inquired Joyce like a flash, remembering the great Queen's ungovernable rages. Drew's momentary pause had not been lost on her.

"Heaven forbid," said Drew promptly. "You forget the Queen's treatment of her most loyal, loving courtiers." He swept her an exaggerated bow. "Nay, madam, an 'twere so, I should go in terror of my life."

"Drew," said Christine earnestly as he stepped down into Sputter, "do keep an eye on Dicky if you can; I wish the committee hadn't chosen him to be in the tableau for the photograph; he's sure to ruin it; being a Pottawattamie seems to have gone to his head."

"He'll be all right," said Drew serenely, proceeding to test Sputter's uncertain temper.

"That's what Dad and Mother say," said Christine reproachfully; "and they know, and *you* know very well he *isn't* always all right."

"There, there, Old Lady," said Drew, grinning. "Is she worried and shamed by her family, then? Gee, it's a quarter to nine, and I promised Judy I'd be there at nine sharp. I'll keep an eye on Dicky — so-long, everybody."

"There are Nora and Froggy coming already," said Joyce as she turned to go up to the house. "Nora is determined to be *on* time — if not *in* time."

They spent a busy morning, for there were many last things to do; even Professor Davidson had been enlisted, and helped his wife squeeze lemons for the lemonade which was to be sold after the entertainment.

It was late before they sat down to luncheon, and they were just about to leave the table, when Drew appeared ravenously hungry and in the highest spirits.

"Have you got it?" Christine asked him eagerly.

"It? Now isn't that like a girl?" Drew said provokingly. "Do you mean the birch canoe I've spent the morning patching, or Ted's tomahawk, or Hugh's arquebus, or the peace pipe, or Dicky's bow and arrow, or the tent-floors we lugged over for you girls to dance on, or —"

"The parcel," said Joyce and Christine together.

"No, Joyce; I'm awfully sorry, there was nothing for you on the boat. I asked the baggageman to have an extra look, but he reported 'nothing doing.'"

Christine looked more disappointed than Joyce.

"If only we had a little more time," she mourned, "we could easily make you a Priscilla costume, but I don't see how we're going to do it."

"We're not going to try," said Joyce firmly. "It would just spoil the day; and I've a perfectly good Japanese kimono, so don't let's think about it."

"Professor Greer is going to read the poem on Champlain which he composed for the Tercentenary," announced Drew, "and Dr. Kingston is going to bring his big camera and take some shots at us."

"Oh, is he?" said Christine in an interested tone. "He *does* take beautiful pictures: probably some of them will be printed in the Toronto and Montreal papers."

"I was trying to tell them about it," said Dicky disgustedly, "but they wouldn't listen to *me*. I'm going to stand up on the high rock and shoot with my bow 'n' arrow in one of the pictures."

"He's got a very important part," said Drew gravely. "He and Froggy have to stand *absolutely* still because they'll be so prominent."

"No reading to-day, I suppose," said Professor Davidson as they rose from the table leaving Drew to finish by himself.

"Reading!" said every one in various tones of horror. "If you knew how much we have to do between now and boat-time!"

It *was* a time of hurrying and scurrying, but very delightful, nevertheless, except perhaps to two or three of the committee who were responsible for the countless little details of preparation upon which hinge the success of such an affair.

By half-past three the bay was dotted with motor-boats, canoes, and sail-boats, all heading for the Big Dock and Deer Island. A number of spectators from neighboring resorts had already landed, and, with the parents of the performers and other grown-ups, were carrying camp-chairs or cushions to the slopes, where they selected vantage-points from which they could get a good view of the proceedings on Deer Island across the narrow channel; the young folk landed on Deer Island, and viewed with interest the wigwams which the boys had set up that morning.

There was much chattering and chaffing, a scrambling over the rocks and a waving to fathers and mothers on the part of the younger fry, a hurried delivering of properties to the chief actors by the properties' committee, then Drew gave a signal and the results of his careful organization were at once apparent.

Father Le Caron took a prominent position in the foreground and began to tell his rosary; Joyce and Judith marshaled the Indian maidens behind a screen of trees; the squaws took their places in the doorways of the wigwams, bending industriously over bead-work or basket-weaving; the little tots played near by in the sand delightfully unconscious of their part in the drama, in marked contrast to the braves idling about in the sunshine according to the traditional fashion of your Indian warrior at his ease with his womenfolk, but looking strangely conscious of their war-paint, scanty clothing, and strange feather headdresses.

On the other side of the narrow channel, Dr. Kingston set up his camera, and, when he had everything to his liking, his sign to Drew was promptly answered by Dicky who ran through the bushes to a point where he could signal to Champlain, hidden with his guides and Indian followers around the corner of a big rocky cliff, that everything was in readiness for them to burst upon the scene, and startle this peaceful village into astonishment and amazement.

Dicky was back in an instant, whispered "O.K." to Drew, ran up to his prominent position on the high rock at the extreme right of the scene, and, drawing his bow, took up the young hunter's pose.

It had been agreed that at the signal Ted and Noel, who were respectively Champlain's French interpreter and guide, should burst into song — a French boating-song — and the Indians, bending to their paddles, should come around the corner at full speed, so that Champlain might land with a flourish on the chosen spot. Ted and Noel had made some difficulty about the song — neither of them could keep a tune, they had asserted — but Drew had assured them that all they needed to do was to make a big noise, "It won't last long, you know," he had added consolingly. "There will be our shouts of welcome to drown your discords."

It was very peaceful now in the little Indian village, very peaceful, and very quiet, horribly quiet, almost unbearably quiet. Where was the promised gay burst of song?

Drew confessed afterward that he thought he must have acquired the long-desired gift of twitching his ears backward or forward at will, so hard did he strain to hear the slightest whisper of music.

The squaws began to look anxious, and in the silence the laugh of one of the children on the shore sounded like the sudden roar of a gun.

Some of the spectators began openly to criticize the graceful (?) attitudes of the braves.

The sweat broke out on Drew's forehead.

By a sudden intuition he knew what had happened. The cracks in the fragile birch-bark canoe had given way in spite of all their patching!

He supposed, he hoped, he prayed, there was an extra canoe handy, but of course the idiots probably had only a motor-boat and Champlain would have to come in the canoe which should have carried his Indian companions!

But there was a sudden horrible noise coming from behind the cliff! Ted and Noel *had* burst into song!

From that moment everything went like the proverbial clockwork.

The birch canoe drew up at the little cove with the big war canoes close behind. Two banners bearing the lilies of France were carried before.

Champlain, brave in the silk and ruffles of the period, and wearing a big hat with a sweeping plume, landed with a flourish, and Le Caron (registering enormous surprise) rushed to meet him, and was warmly (and damply) embraced. The squaws and braves crowded about in curiosity to see the wonderful stranger more closely. Champlain with a fine dramatic gesture knelt and kissed the soil of this newly discovered world, then directed that the banners should be planted, and led his followers in the cry of "Vive le roi."

"Act I," said Drew to himself wiping the perspiration from his brow and smearing his war-paint into fearful and wonderful futuristic designs. "I wonder how many people have noticed that Champlain's silk hose are a darker shade than they ought to be seeing that he's extremely wet as to his legs, and that the brave old birch is rapidly settling down in the water. I bet it was a close shave."

Act II, the smoking of the pipe of peace, was not quite so interesting to the majority of the spectators across the channel; all they could see was the little fire kindled before the largest wigwam, and the peace pipe being solemnly smoked and solemnly handed from the chief to Champlain, and from Champlain to the braves, who each took a puff or two.

It was well for the patience of all concerned that just here the actors did not try to be quite historically accurate. Joyce, waiting with the other girls behind the screening bushes, remembered with dismay Parkman's description of the hours *and* hours spent by Champlain smoking a peace pipe before a parley.

But the mothers of the braves were not at all bored by this slow action, since it gave them an opportunity for observing how much straighter were their Tommy's or Dicky's legs, how much better his headdress of feathers suited him, and altogether, how much finer and nobler he looked than all the other Tommys and Dickys.

Among the less passionately interested of the spectators was a company of youths from a big summer hotel farther down the bay, one of whom was heard to observe loudly that a little music on the tom-tom would put some "pep" into the show. Whereat from his vantage-point, Dicky, who had sharp ears, and an enormous scorn for any one who did not belong to Wahnanee, bent his bow and landed an arrow skillfully in the midst of the startled group of visitors, who, once they had gotten over their surprise, applauded vigorously Dicky's neat retort.

Drew, just ready to signal Joyce to bring forward her maidens and prepare to entertain Champlain with a farewell dance, frowned, as he heard the applause, and saw that Dicky had been diverting attention from the lawful center of the scene. Had he done wrongly to let Dicky have that prominent post? — but Froggy couldn't stand still for two minutes, and Dicky had promised!

Champlain prepared to embark — this time in a *painted* canoe — but was halted at the proper moment by the entrance of the Indian maidens who ran down to the beach (the tent floors sprinkled with a little sand!), danced for his entertainment, and sang a little mournful song to express their grief at his departure.

It was well done. Even the critical white-flanneled youths from "down the bay" were loud in their praises, and Champlain's stately departure was almost lost sight of in the interest it excited.

"Just as simple and natural and graceful as the dancing of leaves in the wind," said one lady to her neighbor who chanced to be Mrs. Davidson.

"They did look rather like autumn leaves," she said. "I must pass on your pretty compliment to Joyce Hamilton who is mainly responsible for the dance — it wasn't, of course, as easy as it looks."

"Who's that?" said another lady. "Joyce Hamilton? I don't know her. Was she the tall girl with auburn hair at the extreme left end? She's by all odds the most graceful dancer I've ever seen. She was the very 'poetry of motion'!"

Mrs. Davidson smiled proudly, and then leaned forward to say eagerly to a quiet little woman in black, whose cheeks were pink and whose eyes were shining, "Oh, Mrs. Huntley, how well Nora did! You must have been proud of her."

Mrs. Huntley nodded her answer; she couldn't trust herself to speak; tears of joy were too near the surface; *her* Nora who had never before been able to do what other children did, her *darling* Nora!

Dr. Kingston popped in and out from his camera canopy. Champlain turned to bid a dignified farewell to his hosts, the maidens (according to command) took an unstudied pose of graceful regret, and Drew looked up hastily to see that Dicky was once more in the attitude of a young Indian hunter.

This was to be the tableau.

But alas! The director's troubles were not over yet. Dicky (on the top of the cliff) appeared to be executing a solo dance of his own invention.

"Wait a second, Hugh," whispered Drew, who gave a fair imitation of a Fenimore Cooper hero as he slid through the bushes to the back of Dicky's cliff.

"Stand still, you young — skunk!" he hissed fiercely. "Don't you dare to move an eyelid till the picture's taken."

Dicky stiffened to attention; the camera clicked several times; Champlain embarked with great dignity and grace; the squaws and children rushed down to the little beach to wave farewell; the Indian guides gave a fine imitation of genuine Indian paddling, and in a moment or two the canoes disappeared around the corner of the island again.

There was hearty applause from across the channel, and then Dr. Kingston, through the megaphone, invited the performers to hurry and get some lemonade "before it's all gone."

There was an immediate response, for the Indian maidens were to dispense the said lemonade. All the boats this side the channel were soon ferrying the picturesque-looking passengers across to where the long tea-table had been set under the trees.

Drew and his committee remained behind to pack up the properties and talk things over.

"Congrats, Joyce," said Hugh, who had landed on the other side of the point and walked over. "The dance you so kindly arranged for my especial benefit was entirely satisfactory to me, if I may be permitted to say so."

"Satisfactory?" said Ted. "It was a peach. Looked pretty from the water, I can tell you."

"Ted, you had a good view of us all," said Joyce earnestly; "did you notice how well Nora Huntley did!"

"Nora?" said Ted in amazement. "I can't say I did. I thought you and Judy were A 1! I never thought of that rum little kid being anything much."

"She was fine," said Christine, beaming. "I noticed particularly; I could see her better than you, Joy, and she looked *so* happy with the others."

"Pretty near squeak that," said Noel regarding the waterlogged birch-bark canoe gloomily. "Only my prompt Sir Walter Raleigh heroism in spreading my sweater for Hugh to kneel on saved the day — I never thought we'd make it. Champlain in a wet satin suit clinging to his skin would have been a cheery sight!"

"'All's well that ends well,'" said Drew, taking down a wigwam. "Here, Dicky, you better cut along."

The unconscious change in his tone pierced

Dicky to the heart. To be called a — a — skunk — and then told to cut along in that kind of voice — he bet anybody would jump if they had five million wasps' bites on their bare legs!

He turned away hastily and tried to whistle his siren steam blast which he knew every one hated, but somehow or other his lips were "trembly," and all he could call forth was a very poor imitation of his best ear-racking efforts.

Joyce, who was helping Drew, uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Why-ee, Dicky Davidson, whatever have you done to yourself? Why, Dicky —!"

Christine and Drew seized Dicky, who was trying hastily to escape since there were tears now, real tears, pricking under his eyelids.

"Oh, Dicky," crooned Christine. "You poor lamb. Oh, goodness, there are *dozens* of them!"

This was all Dicky needed to stiffen his spine. He wasn't going to have a lot of girls bothering over him — not he.

"Aw, what's a few bites!" he said loftily. "I just stepped on a nest up there. I guess we better clear it away, Drew, in case some of these girls should step on it." (His eleven-year-old masculine patronage was delicious.)

"Sure thing," said Drew heartily. "The last time a wasp stung me, a chap told me to wet the blue-bag and stick it on the place. How'd it be if you and Froggy were to run over in Sputter to his house — that'll be nearer than going home — and borrow the blue-bag? Then you can have refreshments with us fellows later."

"Us fellows!" Dicky beamed: *amende honorable* had indeed been made for the "skunk" of a few minutes ago.

"There, we can leave the rest of the things till to-morrow, even if it does rain," said Drew. "Judy" — to that busy person who was just handing Joyce a large box with directions as to what to do with it — "you've saved our lives with these nice business-like lists and boxes for the properties. If you ever want to be Premier, or the president of a railway, just apply to me for a testimonial."

Joyce didn't hear what Judith said in reply, for at that moment the Gray Goose started to snort and puff, but a pang of envy shot through her pleasure in her little part of the success.

They had a merry tea-party, however, and counted the gate receipts and tea-money with great satisfaction and joy at the thought that five, perhaps six, little children, would be given a holiday in the country as the result of the enterprise. On the way home Joyce took herself to task for her ungracious thoughts of Judith's conscientious carrying-out of her responsibilities, so that, when they landed at Ken-jockety, she picked up the box and asked Christine, "Do you know what Judy wanted me to do with this box? I didn't hear exactly — I'm afraid I wasn't listening very hard — something about leaving it in the chalet till evening, wasn't it?"

"Oh, that!" said Christine, looking conscience-stricken and excited at the same moment. "She really asked me to look after it, and I forgot all about it till now; she asked me to give it to you after we got home. Joy, isn't she a brick! Didn't she look *lovely* in the dance! I just kept thinking of a bird — you know — circling the way the gulls do — or a big butterfly —"

"Well, what am I to do with the box?" demanded Joyce rather impatiently. "I haven't much time, for I've got to concoct a Japanese costume."

"You were to wait until you reached the chalet, and then *open* it," said Christine, her eyes dancing. "Let's hurry."

A suspicion crept into Joyce's mind. She hoped *not* — especially when she had assured Judy that the costume from Boston would *certainly* come in time.

But her suspicions were right. There inside the box lay a lovely dress of bronze-and-gold brocade, fit for a queen; a smaller box held a stiff white ruff and a little pearl-studded head-dress. On top lay a note, and while Christine "oh'd" and "ah'd" over the lovely things, Joyce read:

Please don't say 'no,' Joyce. From the moment Aunt Nell said she'd send me the Mary Queen of Scots dress I knew that it would be wasted on me, and that you *ought* to be Queen Mary. Did any one ever tell you how like her you look? You had your own plans, so I didn't say anything, but now that your dress hasn't come, *please* wear this one. I'd much rather dress like Nancy, anyway, and we are going as Ursuline nuns: the dresses are easy as easy and we had enough gray stuff for two. Please!

Affectionately JUDY

Joyce's cheeks were rather pink as she turned to survey the lovely costume that Christine was holding up for her admiration.

"Judy was afraid you might want to say 'no' and think you shouldn't take it 'cos her Aunt Nell sent it for her, but you *will* wear it, won't you?"

"I'd be a horrid ungrateful pig to spoil such nice generous thoughtfulness if I didn't wear it," said Joyce quickly. "Judy *is* a brick, Chris; you're right about her."

"What have we here?" said Professor Davidson a little later as Christine and Joyce came into the sitting-room to show themselves to the family before putting on their cloaks.

"My dear, you *do* look nice," said Mrs. Davidson when she had made Joyce a sweeping curtsy. "A very perfect Queen Mary, auburn hair, gray-green eyes, and all."

"Turn around slowly, Christine, while I guess," Professor Davidson was saying. "A French Court lady, of that I'm sure. Why not Monsieur de Champlain's sweetheart? She was sixteen and fair-haired, I'm told, when the Comte sailed away and left her. And here's Drew looking very gallant and gay. Not Lochinvar, I hope."

"That's what I call all right," said Drew, surveying Christine in her finery and then Joyce in her splendor.

"All right!" said Christine scornfully. (She had entirely forgotten her own appearance in her glee over Joyce's.) "All right! Absolutely stunning, I should say. Why, she's perfectly —"

"And absolutely," said Professor Davidson, putting down his book with a smile. "Your adverbs are justified for once, my dear. Drew means it all, but he's suffering from masculine dumbness. Have a good time, children."

And they did. According to Christine, a perfectly wonderful and absolutely perfect time, from the moment when they landed at Long Point — which looked like the scene of a party in a fairy-tale, so enchanting were the Chinese lanterns hung in the pine grove and on the verandas — until good-nights were said, and queens and kings, courtiers and peasants, countesses and nuns paddled home across the quiet starlit waters.

A very happy day!

CHAPTER X

THE CAMPING-TRIP

It was well that the borrowed properties were returned promptly after the pageant, for next day was quite busy enough.

Such a packing-up and getting ready for another good time!

Mrs. Davidson and Peggy and Dicky must get ready for their visit with Mrs. Benson; Christine and Joyce and Drew must make preparations for the Muskoka trip.

Peggy and Dicky were so attached to all their belongings at Ken-jockety that it was a wrench to leave any of them even for three days.

"Not all these, Peggy, darling," Joyce, going into the living-room for her camera, heard Mrs. Davidson say. "It's a short visit, you know. Let's just take one book apiece. No, certainly not the mud turtle — he'll get along quite happily until we come home again. Of course he will. He fed himself until you came along like a fairy godmother. Bring me your second-best white frock — yes, the linen one.

Did you put clean hankies into the suitcase? Oh, not your gun, Dicky," as Dicky held up a large old-fashioned shotgun which had once been Drew's and had suffered such severe handling as to rely now, as a dangerous weapon, only upon its ferocious appearance.

"There's no man there but me," said Dicky earnestly, "and I'd like a gun if I'm to look after all you women."

Mrs. Davidson seemed to realize the importance of having a man about, for she answered soberly, "That's so, son, I'd forgotten that you were in charge. Put the gun here with your club-bag."

"I bet Drew takes his gun," said Dicky. "You never know what you might see up the river. Jacques said he got a big black bear last fall, 'n' there's a cranberry swamp up there, 'n' bears like cranberries. *I* wouldn't go up without a gun. Froggy thinks there's a bear around their lagoon — why, he saw tracks as big as big! You better not go off by yourself, Joyce — there's lots of dangerous things up the river — why, Froggy —"

"Run away, Dicky, do. There's Christine now, and I can't have you both talking at once."

"Mother, *have* you seen my sun-glasses? I left them on the little table right here — and does anybody know where Drew's second biggest frying-pan is? He says I borrowed it — I didn't, did I, Joyce? And, Mum, would you *please* mend this tear in my middy — it's a horrid three-cornered one — and, Mum, we haven't a speck of cornmeal! Drew wants some for frying fish. Let's go over to Boschink and borrow some, Joyce."

"Let me go, Mum," said Dicky. "Uncle Ben promised me some worms to use while he's gone. I want to see where he puts 'em."

"Me, too," piped Peggy. "Mother, *please* mend Arabella's neck while I'm gone."

At a nod from his mother, Dicky was off like a flash, with Peggy running after him declaring loudly that Mother said she might go, too.

Joyce laughed as the door banged behind Dicky.

"I should think you'd need two or three pairs of hands, and at least two pairs of ears, Aunt Fran," she said. "I don't know how you manage to straighten out everybody's troubles. I'm all ready for to-morrow — as far as I know — so let me be one of your extra pairs of hands. Could I do your middy, Chris?"

"I'm sure you could, Joy, but I want Christine to do it herself; she doesn't mend nearly as well as you do!"

"*Doesn't* she do it beautifully?" said Christine cheerfully. "And you should see how tidy her part of the chalet is. I wish I could sew like she does, but I wasn't born that way."

"Nor me," said Joyce. "But you see I spent one winter at a school in England, and I just *had* to be tidy and learn to sew. I hated it, but there was no getting out of it. They *do* do things thoroughly over there, you know. If mending was on your daily time-table — well, you just had to learn to mend, and mend *well.* Of course over here where we choose our studies, no one would choose mending!"

Christine laughed at the very idea, and made a wry face as her mother gave her a patch to slip in under the three-cornered tear. "Arabella's neck" sounded difficult, but an Indian papoose dolly has an easy neck to mend, and Joyce was soon finished with this, and ready for another task.

"I'm glad to goodness," said Christine next morning at the breakfast-table, "that we were so virtuous yesterday. I finished up about twenty odd jobs. Mum, I do think a clearingup day is a splendid idea. The state of my wardrobe is irreproachable now, and I'm all ready for to-day."

But she wasn't. Of course she wasn't! She was hunting wildly for her second-best bathing-suit because she'd forgotten to mend the one she used regularly, when Dicky, who had been down to the wharf at least ten times that morning, rushed up to say that the Gray Goose would be there in two minutes, " 'n' Drew says you mustn't keep everybody waiting, Chris."

"It can't be nine o'clock," wailed Chris. "Where can that wretched bathing-suit be? Yes, Mummy, darling, I *will* be careful. — Oh, here it is! Thank you, Joyce."

And Christine was off to put it in the dunnage-bag, leaving her mother and Joyce to follow more slowly.

Joyce saw the lovely, tender, brooding, mother-look in the beautiful eyes.

Mrs. Davidson put her arm around Joyce. "Other little daughter," she said, "you'll be very careful, won't you, while you're away, and look after Chris for me, will you? You know how hasty and impulsive she is. I can trust you not to do anything foolish, but Christine gets so excited."

"Why, Aunt Fran," said Joyce, "Chris is always looking after me, but I'll hold her back if she gets too wildly excited: I'd — I'd do *anything* for Chris."

At the moment she was ready to promise anything; she would lay down her life if need be. Aunt Fran could trust her; of course she'd be careful; Aunt Fran was a *darling;* there was no doubt about that.

Drew was stowing away dunnage-bags in the red canoe and the Veery which were to be towed behind the Goose, and he and Dicky elected to ride in the canoes while the other passengers with their suitcases and Arabella and the rifle climbed down into the hospitable Goose and were soon landed at Boschink.

Mrs. Benson was giving last instructions to Judith and Nancy.

"It *is* a risk letting these precious daughters go away with *mere* fathers," her eyes telegraphed rather anxiously to Mrs. Davidson.

"Not a bit of it," was the unspoken but reassuring answer. "They'll be all right."

"Nothing's going to happen to us, Mother, darling," said Judith, giving her mother a last hug — "except a good time. And I do hope we meet the boys at the right place. Got your letter, Nancy, in case we forget instructions?"

"Lots of things are going to happen," said Christine gayly. "We'll have a whole list of adventures to tell you when we get back Saturday night — at least I hope so — it *would* be dull not to have adventures."

"Well, you get me a good big piece of red cedar, Drew, and watch out for a bear," said Dicky, who was torn between envy at their good luck in going and joy at the thought of the almost unlimited number of worms put at his disposal by Uncle Ben. "You keep your eye skinned for a bear, and if you see any deer, for goodness' sake, get a snap-shot, Chris — have the camera *ready!*"

There was a general laugh at Dicky's exhortation, and then, "All aboard that's going aboard," sang Drew; Uncle Ben and Nancy led off in the Gosling, Judy, Christine, and Drew followed in the red canoe, and Joyce and Uncle Graeme brought up the rear in the Veery.

It was a delicious morning all blue and golden; presently it would be hot, but as yet there was a breeze blowing in from the open which broke up the water into tiny dancing waves.

The little procession threaded its way through the islands and across the bay, waving to acquaintances on the various docks and verandas. They met Hugh on his way to the post-office, but refused with great dignity his offer of a tow as far as the chute.

Once they entered the river, they met no one else and to Joyce, after the rush and turmoil of the last few days, the quiet was soothing and grateful.

She paddled steadily and rhythmically, and beyond complimenting her once on her improved stroke, Professor Davidson made no pretense at conversation. Joyce was one of the family now and quite used to "Dad's brown studies," as Christine had nicknamed her father's contemplative moods.

After the broad reaches and wide horizons which were their everyday fare at Ken-jockety, these more restricted views of landscape and water up the river were interesting and restful.

Judith, in the canoe ahead, could be seen pointing out to Nancy Jacques's farm, and the beaver dam, and the curiously shaped rocks in the Narrows. To Joyce this first stretch of the river was like an old friend now, for this was her third — no, her fourth trip, as far as the lumber chute. She smiled to herself as she remembered her first picnic up here; it seemed months and months ago. Was it possible that she had been at Ken-jockety only six weeks?

Judith wanted to linger at the chute and show Nancy the little waterfall and see if any lady's-slippers were to be found in the glen, but Drew was all for pressing on to the second portage before a halt was made for luncheon, and, as the two men were keen to get some fishing in Little Gull Lake that evening, they agreed with Drew.

Drew, who had been unanimously elected Transport Officer, divided up the dunnage and paddles between the girls, and then the three men, each with a heavy canoe for a hat, went, staggering a little, down the trail.

"They'll be hot, oh, very very hot," said Judith. "Let's give them five minutes to cool off before we appear."

"Anybody feel the pangs of hunger?" asked Nancy. "Because if so —" She paused suggestively, holding up some chocolate bars in her hand.

"Me," said three voices promptly.

"I don't see how I *can* be hungry," said Joyce, "but I *am*."

They divided the chocolate, but found the mosquitoes so bad on the shady spots along the trail that they decided to follow the canoe-carriers at once.

Again the dunnage was carefully stowed away, and they struck across the little lake, heading for a point which was a favorite camping-ground with the Davidsons.

"That's the straighter route if one is going direct to Bala," said Professor Davidson, pointing eastward with his paddle, as he and Joyce followed the others. "But Little Gull will give us a good day's fishing, we hope, to-morrow, and Two Pines Point is a very beautiful spot. Did you see Drew's map before we left?"

"I just glanced at it yesterday," said Joyce. "I was amazed to see how many lakes there are in this part of the country — dozens and dozens of 'em. There's a pretty island. I'd like to land there. How far could we go, Uncle Graeme, if we set out to see this part of Canada in a canoe? Some summer I'd like to coax Dad to spend his holidays with me exploring all these lakes."

"You and the Colonel would have a full summer," said Professor Davidson. "I couldn't say how far you could go; you don't forget that Champlain came up the Ottawa in a canoe, crossed over by Lake Nipissing, and came down Georgian Bay and through to Lakes Couchiching and Simcoe; he had some long portages, of course, but we've built canals since his day; then there are all the lovely Muskoka lakes and the countless little lakes and rivers farther north in Algonquin Park and Temagami. You'd have to spend a week resting in between-whiles at Ken-jockety, my dear."

"I'm going to buy a geography of Canada," declared Joyce positively. "I'm criminally ignorant. But — you mustn't laugh — I'm going to be an explorer; that's my firm intention and highest ambition."

By one o'clock the girls, at any rate, were glad to fling themselves down in the shade of the big pines for a rest. The last half-hour's going had tired every one with the exception of Drew, who chaffed the others on being in bad condition and offered to get the luncheon.

"No, thank you, I'll get luncheon," said Judith, "and no one need help."

"Not fair," said Christine. "Drew will light a fire, and I'll set the table —"

"We needn't have a fire," said Judith; "and as you won't let me be a hero, I'll 'fess that Mother made us a luncheon this morning. Here it is in this box which we can throw away afterward — heaps of sandwiches and tarts and — and you won't believe it — *two* thermos bottles of iced lemonade, strong, so we can dilute it."

"Your mother is an angel, Judy," said Joyce solemnly. "I've been thinking about *nothing* this last hour but iced lemonade — cold and tinkly in a tall glass with a straw. I don't think I ever was so hot in my life! Why ever did we wear such heavy clothes — ugh! — the very thought of serge knickers makes me *boil!*"

"May be cold or raining to-night," said Christine soothingly. "Then how would you feel in wilted cotton? And how would you have liked to carry more luggage than we already have?"

In a few minutes Joyce had her desire — a long cool drink. Professor Davidson proposed Mrs. Benson's health, which was drunk with a will, for the salad sandwiches were as good as the lemonade, and the tarts the best of all, according to Drew, who claimed the largest share for the Transport Commission.

Drew allowed them three quarters of an hour's rest, and then declared that they must be off if they were to make Two Pines by five o'clock.

"And *must* we make it by five?" queried Dr. Benson, who was enjoying a pipe and his favorite "Compleat Angler."

"It would be better, sir," answered Drew. "We've tents to pitch —"

"And I want an hour's fishing by that high rock," said his father. "Remember the beauties we got there two summers ago, Drew? You'll open your eyes when you see 'em, Benson."

Off they went again, and on through the long hot summer afternoon; muscles were aching and arms and noses burning, long before Drew pointed out two tall pines on a high rock just ahead and the camping-ground beyond it.

"Oh, I *do* hope no one else is there," said Christine.

"Why, couldn't we camp anywhere?" asked Joyce, looking about at the miles of country which all looked very much the same.

"Of course we *could*," answered Christine, "but this is an extra nice spot — some of the boys camped here one year, and they built a splendid fireplace, and a table, and a rack for holding pots and pans; and when you've washed dishes for five or six people on your knees beside the water you'll appreciate a table."

Joyce and Professor Davidson were the first to land and flung up their paddles with a shout when they found that Two Pines was to be theirs for the night.

"What about ten minutes' rest and then to work?" said Drew after they had surveyed their new quarters.

"Slave-driver," moaned Judith. "Is this a pleasure expedition or is it not?"

"It won't be a pleasure expedition unless you have a roof over your head and a bed to sleep on," retorted Drew amiably.

Ten minutes' rest did wonders for tired muscles. Then tents were put up, firewood and water carried, and the two men decided that they might have an hour's fishing before supper while Drew and the girls made the beds.

"The beds!" said Joyce to Nancy. "That won't take long — a few branches with a blanket spread over them."

"It's evident you have never made a spruce bed," returned Nancy, laughing. "I assure you it's a tedious job, especially if you are using the camp for several nights. We go out from our cabin in the Laurentians sometimes for a week at a time, and the making of the beds when we set up camp is the most important job of all."

Fortunately there were spruce trees in abundance about Two Pines — perhaps that was one reason why it was such a favorite camping-site — and Joyce was soon busy gathering the tips of the branches into her red blanket, and helping haul the larger pieces through the underbrush to the camp. There she was initiated by Nancy into the mysteries of how to lay the branches in straight even rows, and fill up the spaces with little twigs so as to form a springy fragrant couch.

Judith and Christine were already unpacking the kitchen utensils and hanging them on the rack that Christine had spoken of. It turned out to be a sapling stripped of its bark and fitted into the crotches of two neighboring trees; its limbs, which had evidently been growing in a very regular row, had been lopped off about four inches from the parent stem, and these pegs were most useful for hanging up frying-pans, coffee-pot, etc. The table was merely a rough plank nailed to two tree stumps, but at a most convenient height for dishwashing purposes.

"*Voilà*," said Christine, hanging up the last saucepan, "*C'est fini!* Now for supper! Do you know," she continued solemnly, "every time I go camping, I promise myself that I won't be greedy, but I get *so* hungry I just don't seem to be able to *help* thinking about what I'm going to have to eat."

The others laughed at her rueful face, and Judith and Nancy agreed that they felt exactly the same way.

"Do come here," cried Joyce excitedly. "Here's something up the tree — it's a kitten — no — it isn't — oh! —"

"Oh — oh — isn't it the cutest thing?" said Nancy, who reached the tree first. "What ever can it be?"

"It's a baby porcupine," said Christine. "I saw one the last trip we had — look, he's coming down — he isn't a bit afraid — hush — let's see if we can get him — I wonder where Drew is?"

She ran down to the boat for a paddle.

The comical little fellow in the pine-tree was evidently not at all alarmed by the big creatures below, for he came slowly down the tree. The girls held their breath as Christine cautiously slid the paddle up the trunk and touched him. He was inquisitive as so many of the wild creatures are; he put out one clumsy little paw and felt the paddle, but move again he would not, for all Christine's persuasive poking and nudgings.

"Porcupines are crazy about salt," said Judith. "Let's try him with some salted biscuit or bread."

Up went the salted morsel and out went porcy's paw to gather in this strange good-smelling stuff, but at the spontaneous burst of laughter from below he shuffled up the tree again.

"He's double-jointed *everywhere*," cried Nancy. "Oh, I wish he'd do it again!" And she curved her arm out in vain imitation of the little visitor's grotesque movements.

Just then a shout from the shore brought them running down to the beach to see the catch the two fishermen were proudly displaying.

Drew prepared the bass for the frying-pan and Joyce and Christine peeled potatoes, while Judy and Nancy set out the aluminum plates and cups, sliced bacon, and spread bread and butter.

"Tell me a fairy-tale or a bear story or something to take my mind off the hollow void within me," begged Joyce when the potatoes were bubbling over the fire and a delicious aroma of bacon and fish was coming from the frying-pan. "I thought three potatoes each was a fearful lot, but I wish we'd done four, Chris."

They *did* enjoy their supper, and after the dishes were washed and the camp made tidy, Drew put a log on the fire to serve as light and as a warning to mosquitoes, and Uncle Ben told yarns about early pioneer days in the Muskoka bush.

Then Professor Davidson reached into his pocket for the inevitable book without which he never seemed complete. This time it was "Maria Chapdelaine," Louis Hémon's epic of pioneer life in the Quebec northlands.

Joyce was very sleepy; she had had a long and strenuous day, and, although she had listened eagerly to Uncle Ben's tales, when she saw Uncle Graeme's hand go to his pocket, she settled down more comfortably, her head pillowed on Christine's knee, and decided that nothing should keep her any longer from the sleep her weary muscles were crying out for.

But the stern beauty of the story seized her and would not let her go. She sat up blinking in the firelight.

"Please excuse me, Uncle Graeme," she cried. "I want to hear the story; I must hear it; but I'm *so* sleepy. It isn't fair, is it, to choose such a beautiful one!"

"I should say it isn't fair," said Uncle Ben emphatically. "It's high time that all good campers were in their beds. No more reading to-night. Joyce and I will head a rebellion. *There* was a man, Graeme," he added as the others got up and stretched their weary limbs. "He's made the French-Canadian pioneer immortal. A great book: how could he — ?"

"Daddy, I'm sorry to interrupt you," said Judith, "but you're blocking the way to our tent, and if you want to kiss me good-night, please do it before you and Uncle Graeme begin a literary pow-wow."

There was no more discussion, good-nights were said, and the four girls retired to their tent.

"It's a tight fit," said Christine cheerfully as she snuggled down on her sweet-smelling bed.

"If I had a shoehorn I'd loan it to you, Joy· You'll need one to get out in the morning. Who ever would have thought we would want blankets to-night? Aren't the stars too wonderful?"

"Choke her, Joy," suggested Judy. "Do anything you like to her, but don't let her talk!"

The camp was soon quiet; but the quiet was not to be unbroken that first night. In the dark hour just before dawn, every one was awakened by a sharp explosion which sounded like a revolver-shot close at hand.

"Any one hurt?" called Dr. Benson anxiously.

"No!" came a chorus of startled voices.

"Stay quietly where you are," commanded the doctor. "Drew, where is your gun?"

"Here beside me," said Drew. "It couldn't have been mine — must be somebody hunting."

"Hunting," said his father — "in the pitch darkness!"

Dr. Benson was already outside with his flashlight, but he announced soon that he could find nothing, and that every one was to go to sleep again.

That, however, was easier said than done. Joyce had a sudden thought.

"Chris," she whispered, "*do* you think it's Indians? — I saw an Indian sailboat in the bay the other day."

"Well, you didn't see the Indians," said Chris drowsily, "or you'd know they wouldn't do anything wild like shooting at us in the dark."

"There's one thing certain, we don't need to worry with Dad and Uncle Graeme and Drew here," said Judith sensibly. "*Moi*, I'm going to go to sleep immediately — I'm asleep now."

CHAPTER XI

THE CAMP-FIRE

"THERE's the Indian again," whispered Joyce tensely next morning, sitting up suddenly with her eyes still closed.

"Indian nothing," laughed Christine. "It's Drew carrying firewood, but he's discovered your Indian all right. I heard him telling Uncle Ben."

"Has he really?" gasped Joyce, eyes quite wide open now. So she hadn't dreamed it after all!

"Yes," said Christine, laughing. "I hate to rob you of your dreams of adventures with bloodthirsty Ojibways, but the pistol shot was merely the thermos bottle exploding! I filled it with hot water last night so the porridge wouldn't take so long this morning. I left it too near the fire, I guess. Don't go to sleep again, *please.* I was hoping you'd waken before I had to shake you once more. I've tried twice. You looked so comfy and happy I hated to do it. You and Judy are the champion sleepers in this camp. It's a perfectly gorgeous morning. Drew said he'd get breakfast — let's go down now for a dip — there's a crane — three of 'em — aren't they *too* ridiculous looking? Oh, why won't my hair curl like yours? Oh, dear, there's a split in my bathing-cap! That's the third cap this season. Where's the soap? The others have gone on."

They found Judith and Nancy already in the water and lost no time in taking a plunge.

As they came out on a tiny sandy beach, Nancy, who was a little ahead of the others, uttered a cry of surprise.

"Whatever are these?" She stooped to examine something in the sand. The others crowded around. There were tracks in the firm wet sand — large footprints!

"A bear!" said Nancy solemnly.

"P'r'aps it's a deer of some kind," suggested Judith.

"Far too big," said Chris. "Let's get Dad and Drew."

She whistled her special call, and Drew's answer came back promptly. A moment later he appeared on the rocks, pancake-flapper in hand.

"What's up?" he called; "I'm making griddle-cakes — can't be interrupted!"

"Bear's tracks," shouted Christine, hugely enjoying the sensation she was making.

"Joking?" said Drew.

"Not," sang back Christine.

By this time Uncle Ben had appeared and the two men reached the spot at the same time, and simultaneously shouted with great scorn, "Porcupine!"

"But they look much too big for a porcupine," objected Christine. "These tracks are huge!"

"So are his feet, sister mine," said Drew. "And so is my appetite," he added. "For sweet pity's sake, if not for mine — hurry!"

They had a merry breakfast, for in camp even breakfasts are joyful.

Plans for the day's pleasure were discussed. The girls, it seemed, were not to be invited to go on the fishing-trip; indeed, they were not very keen to go; a whole day's fishing does not usually appeal to the feminine taste. Also, some of the party must go back to the main trail, and meet the boys who were expected down from Bala that afternoon. A lunch was packed for the fishermen, the fires put out, and the provisions packed up as carefully as possible against the possible visitation of porcupines or ants. Then the whole party got into canoes, and crossed the lake toward the portage leading to Little Gull Lake, supposed to be a fisherman's paradise.

It was an exquisitely *clean* morning — the air so crisply invigorating with its spice of pine and its tang of ozone from the great wind-swept stretches of forest and lake that, after a few minutes' paddling, every one was humming or whistling or singing, and as all the tunes were different, they were soon merged into laughter.

The girls promised to be very careful of themselves, not go in swimming (a bath, yes, but no diving) and to stay near the camp until they went down to the trail in the afternoon.

"Huh!" said Christine as the men disappeared up the trail. "Dad would never think of all these precautions; Mother must have put him up to it; but we can't have the Dear worrying his precious head about us. What would everybody like to do? *Moi*, I'd like to dance. Now if I could be Ariel and 'run upon the sharp wind of the north'! What would you like, Joy?"

"Just at present, your assistance," said Joyce. "I can't steer in the bow, silly. Look how Judy is getting ahead of us."

Back at the camp again more plans were made. Judy and Nancy wanted to explore the west shore of the lake, where the trees grew thickly down to the water's edge, and search for water-birds. Nancy had seen several kingfishers that morning already, and believed she might get some good pictures if Judith and she loitered about quietly in their canoe. Christine thought they might get some blueberries for supper a little farther down the shore; so, collecting some tins, they set off once more, keeping, however, within sight of the camp.

They had a peaceful happy morning: Nancy got her pictures, and Christine her berries; Joyce found a clump of bladderwort growing in the sand on the shore, and carried some home in her berry-tin that the others might enjoy the fragile, delicately perfumed butterfly-like blossoms.

After luncheon Christine announced that they had a couple of hours in which to do what they liked before setting off to meet the boys.

"But they might come sooner than we expected," objected Nancy. "Couldn't we go down to the portage and stay near by so we would be sure to see them?"

"Good idea," said Judith. "Let's take some work — I want to write a letter. Didn't you say you had a letter-pad we might use, Joy?"

"I did," said Joyce. "I must write to Dad this very day. He'll love to hear about this trip; I think he must have been up this way when he was at Ken-jockety before."

"Yes," said Christine, "just before the war — with Uncle Michael; they had *such* a good time; — we are glad to remember it."

Once more the canoes set off across the lake; they were beached this time on the shore of an island which Joyce had admired and longed to explore the day before. Any travelers from Muskoka by the regular trail had to pass in full view of it, and from the height at its southern tip a good view was obtained down the little river which emptied into the lake.

The landing-place was shady, so Judith, having begged some sheets of paper, produced a pencil and settled down to her letter. Christine decided on a nap, and Nancy commenced a sketch of Judith.

Joyce hesitated for a moment. Should she follow Judith's example and write her weekly letter? No, she'd explore the island first and write later.

"I'm going on an exploring trip if nobody objects," she announced. "I'll write my letter up on that high point. I'll coo-ee when I get there."

"I'd better come, too," said Christine, opening her eyes and dragging herself rather reluctantly from a delicious drowsiness. "You might get lost."

"Lost, my child?" returned Joyce. "I couldn't nohow; it's much too small an island. I won't be beyond calling distance: I was only going to pretend that there was no one within miles and miles of me, so that I could imagine myself an explorer."

"All right," murmured Christine sleepily, "but don't be too long before you call."

Joyce set off along the shore, jumping lightly in her rubber shoes across the little inlets of clear water near the shore line, and clambering up over the big boulders.

Not one of the new occupations of the summer (and she was enjoying a good many) had given her as much pleasure as this game of "exploring." She loved to "poke about," looking at the possibilities of a point or an island, deciding on a good site for a house, searching for a safe harbor, and keeping an eye open for signs of recent Indian camps.

A few weeks ago she would have scorned these proceedings as "childish," and "a bore," but there was no doubt but that she was enjoying herself to-day.

"This would be a good place for a house," said the explorer suddenly. "Right here under these pines, with the harbor on the east, and a view of the sunset, and this high point as a lookout — of course, it isn't as nice as Little Moon. I've never seen another quite as nice. *Don't* I wish it were mine! — I wonder if that American would sell it. Why didn't I ever think of that before?" A light broke out on her face, and she hurried up the slope to the lookout rock to write her letter; she would ask her father if he *could* and *would* buy an island near the Davidsons', even the tiniest one, but Little Moon if it were at all possible. Why *hadn't* she thought of it before?

She found a comfortable spot away from the trees, in the shade of a rock, and her pencil flew over the paper. A little green garter snake slid by on the rock, but she did not stir. "Funny that I used to be so *frightened* of a tiny thing like that," she thought. "It *is* a pretty — a lovely color — though I must say I'll never *like* the horrid things."

There was much to be chronicled this week: the pageant, and the dance, and this camping trip, and the plan for the buying of an island. She was only well started, when "Coo-ee" came in Christine's clear voice from below.

"Coo-ee, coo-ee," called Joyce, frowning at her own forgetfulness. Christine had probably not gone to sleep at all until she knew that Joyce was safe and near at hand. What a *dear* Christine was!

Joyce finished her letter and then crossed to the edge of the cliff and looked up the river. No, no canoes in sight yet; not a human being, nor yet any sign of their works or habitations to be seen. Something of the mystery of the wilderness crept into Joyce's soul, sobered her, almost depressed her; she felt small, unimportant as the little midges floating in the air, until she remembered Christine and the others hidden down there on the beach.

"Dear old Chris," she thought, as she stretched out on the fragrant pine-needles and looked up through the waving branches to the white fleecy clouds sailing across the blue sky. "She's so generous and loyal; she'd rather I had a good time than she herself — and she'd believe in me even if nobody else did."

The words, forming themselves in her mind and drifting lazily past like the white clouds overhead, woke suddenly a memory of her father's voice. "A friend — some one — who believes in you were the whole world against you — 'Haply I think on thee . . . sings hymns at Heaven's gate.'"

Well, she had a friend now; she must contrive to let Dad know — if she could do so without being sentimental. How did that stanza end? She must look it up when she got back to Ken-jockety; there was a volume of the "Sonnets" on the bookshelf.

Joyce lay still a little longer enjoying a sense of well-being and comfort and savoring, too, this new idea of friends. There was Aunt Fran, and Judy, and Drew. She began to realize what it must have meant to her father to lose Michael Lawrence; she was glad he still had Uncle Graeme and Aunt Fran; he was right, Aunt Fran *was* a Person. He was right, too, about her luck in being here. She wouldn't forget Aunt Fran's trust, and, if Aunt Fran seemed to think it was so awfully important, she was certainly not going to lose her temper again.

"Coo-ee," called Christine again — from

halfway up the slope. "Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anybody coming?"

Joyce jumped to her feet and looked up the river and down to the portage.

"'Alas, my poor sister. No help is yet in sight,'" she quoted.

"Well, come on down," called Christine.

So, tucking her letter into the pocket of her blouse, Joyce scrambled down to find Bluebeard's wife taking counsel with her maids.

"It's five o'clock," said Judith. "Chris thinks she'd better get the camp-fire going."

"You come with me, Joy," urged Christine. "Judy must wait here with Nancy. I've told her that several times."

"Sure she must," said Joyce, jumping into the canoe. "Besides, I'm the potato boy, and, much as I should enjoy Nancy's society, 'duty before pleasure' as the lobster said when he swallowed the crab."

There was no red canoe on the beach when they landed at Two Pines. They got to work at once, and the fire was just burning well and the potatoes almost ready for the pot, when Drew's piercing whistle was heard.

"Judy and Nancy are waiting for the boys," called Christine as soon as the canoe was within earshot. "Show us your minnows, Drew."

Drew went through a pantomime of disgust and disappointment, and then, unable to wait till they landed, picked up a fish from the basket at his feet and held it up with pardonable pride.

"Ohhhh!" said Christine and Joyce together. "What a dandy!"

Uncle Ben was beaming. For once his fisherman's soul was satisfied. It had been a great day!

"Izaak Walton had nothing to beat this," he declared solemnly as he lifted out the catch to Drew who had landed first. "I used to think of him with envy, but now I'm sorry for him. He never fished for a gamey black bass in Canada, poor fellow! Cricky, that big one gave me a fight — I thought he was off a dozen times at least. Ah, there comes Judy now — with two strange young men. I'd better wash my hands before she introduces me as her respected parent. Christine, is the part in my hair straight? Do you think they will like my complexion? Don't giggle, girl, advise me."

The newcomers proved to be two khaki-clad, well-tanned youths with the same springy carriage and alert keen eyes as Drew ("though not nearly so good-looking," thought Joyce privately as she hurried up to the fire again).

How terrible if her johnnycake were not light and fluffy! Of course she had made it exactly as she did for breakfast at Ken-jockety — but one never knew. She hovered about the fire anxiously poking in little bits of sticks where they seemed needed in order to get an even heat.

Uncle Ben and Drew performed miracles of speed in getting the fish ready for the pan, and luck was with Joyce, for her cake came out fluffy and light and browned to a most desirable tint. She put the pan on one side of the fire to keep hot until the fish was ready to serve, and helped with the blueberry salad. The boys had brought a little bucketful of late raspberries from Muskoka, and as these were rarely found about Georgian Bay, Christine decided they would make them go as far as possible by mixing them with the blueberries they had picked that morning.

It was the jolliest of meals. Anything would have tasted good eaten in such good company, and seasoned with that best of sauces, a keen out-of-doors appetite.

The cooks were complimented upon their success and the johnnycake received especial praise.

"A big piece, please, Sis," said Jack, passing his plate for a third time. "The girl who made that cake is an artist, a poet; henceforth I am the most ardent, if the humblest, of her admirers."

"Very nicely put," said Nancy with a twinkle, for she guessed from something that had been said before that Jack thought Judith had cooked the cake before leaving to meet them. "You wouldn't get so much praise from them if you *had* written a poem, Joyce."

"Everything in good time," said Dr. Benson. "I suppose, since mere men can't make poetical johnnycakes, they can at least wash the pans. Dishwashing squad, 'shun! Taking the paper napkin firmly in the right hand, and the plate in the left, with a quick circular motion to the right, swipe! One, two — exactly."

"Let's do it to music," suggested Tom. "Nancy will please oblige with 'Drink to me only with thine eyes' while we wipe the cups."

The dishes were soon washed and put away.

Drew and Jack built a bonfire down on the point, and the whole party adjourned there to watch the sunset.

"It's going to be absolutely gorgeous," said Christine happily. "There are enough clouds to make it beautiful; it's lovely now, but wait till the afterglow! If *only* we had some music for the songs!"

The sun had almost disappeared, but long bars of color banded the horizon: orange and rose, violet and palest primrose, blended at last in an exquisitely lovely shade of pale green.

The little company sat quietly watching, while the sun dropped down behind the low clouds on the horizon; the pine-trees on the banks were etched in startling contrast against the glowing sky; a star appeared, shining like a jewel set in the green jade hand.

"'And o'er the crested pine shall hang one star,'" quoted Professor Davidson.

"I'd be perfectly happy," murmured Christine, "if Mother were here to sing to us."

"Those colors are doing their best for you," said Judith. "They really *are* a harmony, aren't they? Though I wish we *could* have some music."

"To Judith, who may command me Anything,"

parodied Jack cleverly —

> "Bid me to live, and I will live
> Thy musicker to be."

He was sitting with Drew a little apart from the rest of the group, and, as Judith turned to smile at the compliment, a tiny thread of thin elfin-like music seemed to trickle from his left hand. Every one turned in astonishment. Was this sleight-of-hand, or magic, or what? Some one, or *something* was undeniably humming, "Drink to me only with Thine Eyes."

Nancy was the first to solve the puzzle.

"Your ukulele!" she said. "You've hidden it very nicely, but you needn't be so modest. Now we can have a sing-song. It's what we've all been wanting to-day. Next time I go on a camping trip I'm going to bring a whistle or a mouth-organ, even if I have to leave my toothbrush behind."

And sing they did with a right good will; "Swanee River," and "Ole Black Joe," "A la claire fontaine," and "John Peel."

Then came requests for special favorites. Tom surprised every one by his "Annie Laurie": then Nancy must sing "Might' Lak A Rose," which she did delightfully.

"Now, it's your turn, Uncle Graeme," suggested Judith. "Please let us have 'The Cruise of the Bugaboo.'"

"The Bugaboo" was applauded and Jack followed by request with

"Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note,
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither."

Jack, like Nancy, had a very pleasing voice. He broke off after the first stanza of the quaint old-fashioned song to say meditatively, "I wonder, now, if Will Shakespeare would have enjoyed this sort of thing?"

"Of course he would," said Christine promptly. "He'd have been a first-rate paddler and sailor, and swimmer and fisherman, and — oh, I know! — he'd have written something like 'Johnnie Courteau.' Let's have 'Johnnie Courteau,' please, Uncle Ben. We *couldn't* go camping without hearing 'Johnnie Courteau.' I wonder if Dr. Drummond composed it on a trip like this — seems as if he must have."

"Johnnie Courteau!" said the others in chorus.

Uncle Ben was whittling a whistle, and had arrived at a critical point in its creation. Would it blow or would it not? He tried! It would not!

"*Eh bien!*" he grunted —

"'You bad leetle boy not moche you care
How busy you're kipin your poor grand pere.'

That's 'Leetle Bateese,' *n'est-ce pas?* Somebody start me!"

"Johnnie Courteau of de mountain,
Johnnie Courteau of de hill,"

Christine prompted.

"*Mais oui,*" said the doctor. "I have heem."

"Johnnie Courteau of de mountain,
Johnnie Courteau of de hill,
Dat was de boy can shoot de gun,
Dat was de boy can jomp an' run,
An' it's not very offen you ketch heem still,
Johnnie Courteau.

"Ax dem along de reever,
Ax dem along de shore,
Who was de mos' bes' fightin' man
From Managanee to Shaw-in-i-gan?
De place w'ere de great beeg rapide roar,
Johnnie Courteau!

"Sam' t'ing on ev'ry shantee
Up on de Mekinac,

Who was de man can walk de log,
W'en w'ole of de reever she's black wit' fog
An' carry de beeges' load on hees back?
Johnnie Courteau!'

The colors in the sky had deepened and softened; there were more stars glittering now in the soft green in the west and in the deep blue overhead; behind them the woods were dark.

Drew put another log on the fire, and for a few moments nobody spoke; every one sat looking contentedly into the dancing flames or into the soft loveliness of the sky.

"My turn now," said Drew. "Judy, will you please stand up on that high rock just behind you and say Pauline Johnson's 'Song My Paddle Sings'?"

"Oh," groaned Judith. "Must I move, Drew? I'm so comfy here. What's the idea?"

"Picture," said Drew. "Pine-tree to your right, afterglow behind, admiring audience at your feet!"

Judith apparently couldn't resist such an appeal, for she obediently climbed the rock. She gave a little cry of delight.

"Picture! — I should say it is: sunset, and the canoes down there on the shore; — the fire here, and those lovely pines — thank you, Drew."

Then, quite simply, but with an appreciation of its beauty which she passed on to her hearers, she recited the Indian princess's lovely lyric.

"August is laughing across the sky,
Laughing while paddle, canoe and I,
Drift, drift,
Where the hills uplift
On either side of the current swift.

"The river rolls in its rocky bed,
My paddle is plying its way ahead;
Dip, dip,
While the waters flip
In foam as over their breast we slip."

Judith looked down to where through the trees she could see the little river and the white foam of its rapids; unconsciously she spoke more quickly as she described the journey through the seething waters in the frail little craft. Then:

"We've raced the rapid, we're far ahead!
The river slips through its silent bed.
Sway, sway,
As the bubbles spray
And fall in tinkling tunes away.

"And up on the hills against the sky,
A fir-tree rocking its lullaby,

Swings, swings,
Its emerald wings,
Swelling the song that my paddle sings."

There was a moment's silence as Judith finished, a silence which was broken by a slight but unmistakable snore.

"Oh, shameless one," said Jack, shaking Tom who lay beside him comfortably propped against a fallen tree, "have you *no* soul for poetry and beauty?"

"What's the row?" inquired Tom sleepily amid the laughter of the others.

"Row's the right word," said Jack severely. "And as you made it — "

"I expect we're all sleepy," said Professor Graeme; "all good campers go to bed early."

"Good-night, ladies," tinkled the ukulele. "Good-night, ladies," boomed Uncle Ben's bass and Drew's tenor. And "Good-night, ladies," they all sang together, just for the pleasure of singing once more.

CHAPTER XII

JOYCE LEARNS THE MEANING OF LOVE

"WHAT'S that, rain?" asked Joyce. "Christine Davidson, it's pouring! Ugh, how clammy and moist everything feels!" She pulled the blanket up a little more closely.

"Well, don't be so indignant," said Christine. "We'll just have to make the best of things — Oh, Joyce!"

There was dismay in the last two words.

She had picked up Joyce's middy and serge knickers and was holding them at arm's length, for they were more than moist, they were dripping wet.

"I must have pushed them over into this little hollow at the side when I tied the tent flaps in the night," said Christine. "It's too bad. I heard something fall. You had them on this branch, hadn't you? I *am* sorry." But Christine didn't look very sorry; indeed, in a moment she was laughing again.

"I *do* wish it were light enough in here to take a snap-shot," she exclaimed. "You look absolutely tragic, Joy, holding out those wet stockings as if they were dead rabbits, or — ”

“Don’t be so silly,” said Joyce rather crossly. “Tell me how I’m to get these things dried. I can’t put them on, that’s certain. I suppose there’s no fire, since it’s raining.”

“Oh, yes, there is,” said Christine penitently. “Drew has been up for some time, and he’s got a fire under a shelter, I expect. I’ll dress in a jiffy and take these down to dry. Better get up, Judibus, I’m afraid I’ll step on some outlying portion of you. We are like sardines in a tin, aren’t we? You all right, Nancy? That’s good. I wonder what we’re going to have for breakfast. I’m hungry, anyway.”

“I’m wondering whether I’ll get up at all,” groaned Judith. “Christine, I wish I knew where you get your over-supply of energy. It’s outrageous of you to be able to talk so much before breakfast. Oh, dear, I’m stiff.”

“First call for breakfast,” called Drew from the kitchen camp. “Coffee’s going on now — ladies will not be waited for after the second call! Gentlemen will begin on the pancakes immediately, having been up for the last hour!”

There was a scurrying and a hurrying in the tent. Judith, apparently, thought that breakfast promised to be too good to miss, and she and Nancy hastily dressed and went off to the kitchen camp.

Joyce decided to be thoroughly cross and miserable.

How careless of Christine to push her clothes right out under the flap of the tent! They wouldn't be dry for hours and hours, and she'd have to stay here in this miserable little place with a damp blanket over her! Oh, dear! *How* her shoulders and back ached! What a wretched thing a spruce bed was! Every single twig just sticking into one's very bones!

These dismal reflections were interrupted by the appearance of Christine carrying a plate heaped high with delicious-looking pancakes. Nancy followed with a steaming cup of coffee.

"The cook's compliments; these are the best of the batch! You're to shout when you're ready for more. But you poor thing! You *do* look melancholy. I'll bring my breakfast in here, too."

"No, you won't," said Nancy, "because I mean to myself. You go and cheer up Judy. I can't succeed."

The two had breakfast together, and Joyce forgot her woes listening to Nancy's account of the skating parties they had had at school the winter before.

The rain came down steadily. It was not "pouring" as Joyce had declared, but was just a persistent "soft wet" rain, and the very best sort of rain for the fisherman, so Uncle Ben asserted.

Jack and Tom had packed a luncheon while Drew got the breakfast, and, before Joyce and Nancy had finished their pancakes, the men were ready to set off for a morning's fishing at little Gull Lake.

"What time are we to expect you?" called Christine after them. "Three o'clock? Well, be sure you aren't later. Mother will be looking for us, you know."

"Wouldn't you think they'd had enough fishing yesterday?" she continued to Judith, who was helping her wash the breakfast dishes.

"If they like to fish they *never* have enough of it," said Judith sagely. "But I don't believe it's always fishing they're after; they just want to be up and doing *something.* Wouldn't you rather have a perfectly good excuse to take you away on a trip whenever things seemed a bit dull? Nicer than staying in camp this morning, at all events. What are *we* going to do with ourselves?"

"Try to get Joyce dry, first of all," said Christine. "We'll have to keep a good fire blazing; serge is *so* hard to dry; Nancy is a perfect darling, isn't she? Just listen to how she is laughing and talking to poor Joyce! I'm afraid she'll have to stay in bed most of the morning; we haven't any extra clothes except a change of undies. Well, we'd better plan a nice lunch, and then crawl into the tent and cheer up the prisoner; it's a pity we didn't bring some sort of a game with us. Oh, Judy, do tell me more about the Form parties at York Hill; I can hardly wait until September!"

The rain *might* be good for fish, and so for fishermen, and for Christine, who was in the highest of spirits, but not at all pleasant for Joyce under her damp blankets.

However, she had no intention of emulating Achilles by sulking in her tent, and was quite ready to take her part in the morning's fun.

Judith and Christine produced their hemstitching, Joyce tried to carve a paperweight out of a bit of red cedar, and Nancy drew caricatures of all and sundry as she had seen them around last night's camp-fire.

They chattered and gossiped about past and present and future doings, and were not at all willing that Christine should do all the talking. The final sailing match at next week's regatta was the favorite topic. Christine and Joyce were loyally sure that Comet was bound to carry off the cup, but Judith shook her head doubtfully.

"Drew's a mighty good sailor," she said, "but so is Hugh, and the Gull is the better boat."

Christine kept up a good fire and by lunch-time Joyce was in warm dry clothes once more. The clouds were breaking up, and the rain had ceased, but Christine, who was weather-wise, declared that she was glad that they were leaving camp that night, as it looked as if they were in for a three days' blow.

After an early lunch they packed the dunnage-bags, and left the camp as tidy as they found it, with everything ready to be packed into the canoes as soon as the boys should appear. Supper they would eat on the way. Then in their two canoes they started across the lake to meet their menfolk.

"We'd better not go far," said Judith. "We might miss them behind one of those islands.

Let's land on the mainland there; we'd have a pretty good lookout from under those pines."

"Good idea," said Nancy, "and, better still, if you'd add, 'and let's have a little sleep while Christine keeps watch.' I'm positive she couldn't go to sleep!"

So it was decided, but Joyce, after her long rest in the morning, didn't feel sleepy either, so she and Christine took the berry-tins and hunted about to find fresh berries for supper.

"Not much luck here," said Christine after an hour's search spent investigating several promising-looking patches, only to find the berries dried up. "It's getting too late in the season for blueberries, and the thimbleberries are hardly ripe yet. However, we must try the cranberry swamp for them when we get home. I can hardly wait now to get back and I was *so* anxious to get away. Won't it be *lovely* to be home again, Joy?"

"It will, indeed," said Joyce heartily. The home faces flashed before her mind's eye: Peggy — darling little thing, and Dicky — yes, even Dicky with his irresistible grin, and Aunt Fran with the beautiful serene eyes — Aunt Fran who was the center and light of the home. Joyce suddenly felt a little lump in her throat. How *good* Aunt Fran had been to her! How *dear* to take her right in, and make her at home! It was a big thing to do. Joyce was beginning to realize that. No wonder Daddy had said —

"No sign of 'em yet," called back Christine who had run on ahead. "But, oh, Joybells! Here are some ripe thimbleberries!"

Joyce ran to get her share, but the vines were tangled about some juniper bushes growing on a little island separated from the shore by only a few yards of swamp and water.

"Wait till I get the canoe," said Joyce. "It can't be very far away. Where are those girls?"

"Wait? Not me, with thimbleberries in sight," laughed Christine, "and certainly not when I have logs to punt over."

She pointed to some pine logs which had drifted into one end of the little channel.

"You sit down at your ease," continued Christine, "and watch me do the giddy lumberman act *à la* Johnnie Courteau!" Fastening her can to her middy-tie, she seized a young sapling and began to punt herself across.

"'Who was de man can walk de log
W'en w'ole of de reever she's black wit' fog
An' carry de beeges' load on hees back?
Johnnie Courteau.'

Come on, Joybells. Take a log and I'll race you."

"Be careful, Chris, you nearly went over that time," said Joyce. "The water looks horridly dirty and weedy. Watch out — there's a sunken tree there!"

But she was too late, the log struck a branch of the tree below water, and turned with incredible swiftness on its wet slimy side plunging Christine into the dark water.

Joyce looked to see the laughing face reappear at once. But there was no sign of Christine.

Joyce needed no invitation this time. Chris must have struck a snag in falling. She might be — suffocating — drowning — down there, and Joyce must give her back safe and sound to Aunt Fran! Like lightning the thought flashed, and then she was under the water searching for Christine.

As she feared, the water was full of dank, slimy weeds and the branches of a tree which had evidently fallen into the water from the overhanging bank.

But where was Chris?

Joyce groped around for a minute or two, and a horrible thought crept into her mind.

Where *was* Chris — darling Chris?

She came up for a breath; she was facing out toward the little island; had Chris swum out from under the logs?

No, the logs were still lying like sleepy crocodiles, the sun still shone on water and rock, but there was no Christine laughing joyously.

Joyce closed her mind on the thought.

"Steady," she said to herself as she went down again. "Steady; she must be here; she *must* be here; she *must* be here."

For the second time she came up for breath, panting as much from the cold fear that was beginning to clutch at her heart as from fatigue.

"Diving for pearls or for exercise?" asked a gay voice behind her.

Joyce turned to see Christine sitting astride the log which had floated in nearer the shore. She had evidently swum toward the shore as Joyce had gone out, and Joyce, looking out toward the island, had in some unaccountable way missed seeing her the first time she came up for breath.

Joyce pulled herself up out of the water without saying a word; her silence ought to have been a signal of the anger that was rising within her. But Christine was excited and unlike herself that day. She took no notice of Joyce's anxiety or discomfort, but burst into laughter at the sight of her face streaked with slime and the juice of some water-weed.

"Oh, Joybells, you do look funny!" More laughter. "Exactly like a naughty dog we had, one of those long-haired ones; he used to stick his nose into the coal-scuttle as soon as he'd had a bath — and the way your hair is plastered down —!"

It was the last straw! To be told that she looked like a naughty dog when she had rather fancied herself as an heroic rescuer! The irritation, which had threatened trouble earlier in the day, blazed forth now in a sudden overwhelming gust of anger. Her face was distorted with a rage which she seemed to be making no effort to control. She said nothing, but, seizing the log, gave an angry little push which sent Christine headlong into the water again.

Then she scrambled up on to the bank without casting a look behind her, and began to run along the shore, as if trying to get away from some invisible pursuer.

No tender thought now of Christine nor of Aunt Fran! Everything blotted out but rage that she should have been made to seem a fool, that she should have been told she looked like a dog! Nothing but rage that her pride had been touched — pride in herself — pride in the Joyce who was to save Christine's life and give her back to Aunt Fran in safety.

She had no idea but to get away from Christine. As she ran, she was conscious of nothing but consuming anger. That Christine should dare! That Christine should dare! That Christine should dare!

She did not know where she was going, gave no glance at lake or sky or rocky path, was unconscious of her wet garments and dripping hair.

She did not know how long she had been running when, at a sudden turn around a rock — Drew striding along, his hands full of delicate lady's-slippers.

"Hullo!" he said gayly. "What ever — ?"

Joyce saw the terror leap into his eyes — the eyes so like Christine's — as he saw her wet clothes and her livid face.

"Chris?" he gasped. "Where did you leave her?"

There was a heartbeat's terrifying silence.

As long as she lived, Joyce would never forget that moment of awful awakening.

She tried to speak. Her lips moved stiffly, but no sound came.

Drew seized her arm.

"Quick," he cried, "quick, every second counts."

His eyes seemed to burn down into her guilty heart — those eyes so like Christine's.

Joyce's lips moved again.

Would this agony never leave her? Could it be borne? Could she tell Drew?

What nemesis had moulded the form of his question, "Where did you leave her?"

"I left her — in the water — my fault —"

She lifted her hands to cover her face.

But Drew gripped her so that his fingers bit like steel bands. Like blue steel now were his eyes — the eyes that had been so like Christine's.

"Where?" he said.

Joyce looked about dazedly.

"I don't — know — down there — perhaps — I don't know — where I am —"

"You must *think* — think *hard* — were you near the camp? Which direction from it? The way we went this morning?"

Joyce's mind cleared.

"Yes," she said. "We were following you — we landed on the shore near a little island — comes close to the shore — logs there."

Drew was off like an arrow loosed from a taut bow-string. But he called back.

"Follow — don't wander off — I'll whistle when I find her — safe."

Joyce followed as well as she could, jumping from rock to rock, cutting across through a swampy bit of underbrush; twice she stumbled and fell, but she did not feel her bruises.

"Chris! Chris! How could I? Oh, how could I? The weeds may have trapped her — and the logs — Chris! I'm not fit to be alive! How could I? How could I? Why does Drew bother about me? I ought to get lost and die."

Suddenly, as she was reaching the edge of her endurance, she heard unmistakably two long piercing whistles.

Something gave way in Joyce's knees and she flung herself down on the smooth rock; something, too, gave way in her heart — something hard and selfish, something proud and cruel.

"QUICK," HE CRIED, "QUICK, EVERY SECOND COUNTS"

Flat on the rock, her face covered so that even the sun might not see her humiliation, Joyce prayed her first real prayer:

"I don't deserve it, God; it seems too good — that she's safe. Oh, help me, for I can't do it myself — I've tried and I've failed — help me to be strong enough to conquer myself — my evil temper. Help me, for I need help."

She lay still, numbed by the violence of her passion and the agony of her awakening and remorse. She felt that she never wanted to uncover her face again, never could walk upright and look the others straight in the eye again, Christine, Judith — Uncle Graeme, Aunt Frances — Drew, with his eyes so like Christine's.

Would this bitter humiliation *always* bow her head?

Drew found her there when he returned a little later.

"She's all right, cracked her head a bit, that's all," he called as he came near enough to be heard. "She says, please to hurry. The other fellows have come and we want to have some tea at the portage and get home in good time."

"Her head?" asked Joyce, disregarding his attempt to speak casually.

"Uncle Ben has bound it up — lucky he had his little kit along! Says you never know what will happen on a camping trip: all sorts of things, sprains and bruises and burns, you know, and cuts —"

Drew stood there waiting; he was trying to help her; she must get up.

Then came the sound of Drew's penknife on a piece of wood.

"I think I'll make a couple more toasting-forks for tea; I can't give you much longer, Joyce; we want to push on after Chris has had a hot cup of tea; Uncle Ben wants to get her home."

"Drew! Why didn't you tell me!" Joyce was on her feet in an instant.

"There's no rush, Joy. And don't go back looking so tragic. I'll tell you exactly what happened. She slipped on a log, apparently, and came down head first on the rock at the shore line. Luckily her head was out of water — you see, she was just regaining consciousness when I got there."

"Drew, she didn't slip, I —"

"I don't know what happened. Nobody does but you and Chris, and you two can keep your own counsel. It's nobody's affair but your own. Judy and Jack have paddled over for the tea-things. Nancy and Dad have a fire going and the kettle on, and they'll be ready with a cup of tea by the time we get back."

The blue eyes were steady — and kind.

"I *must* tell you," she said. "I was in a rage and pushed the log Christine was on. She fell in, and I never even looked to see if she were safe. I oughtn't to be allowed to live with decent people — and Aunt Fran trusted Christine to me."

There was such bitter pain in the last words that Drew winced at her suffering.

"It's beastly for you," he said gravely, "simply beastly — but I'd have sworn that you were no quitter, that if you had a hard job you'd tackle it, and that you'd scorn to knuckle down to a temper."

His eyes sought Joyce's and held them steadily — a friendly reassurance was there, a friendly belief in her.

"Drew, I'll try."

"Then I'll bet on you," said Drew simply. "Now we'd better get back. Suppose you bathe your eyes while I see if I can get this bit of red cedar; it looks as if it would make a good hat-rack."

The return journey was accomplished swiftly, and every one was too busy in the camp to do more than call to them an admonition to hurry.

Christine, looking very white under her bandages, beckoned as they approached, made room for Joyce on the rug beside her, and began to talk gayly as soon as they were within earshot.

"So you've got some red cedar! Mum *will* be pleased, and Dicky is simply dying for another piece. I s'pose Drew told you about my silly head. Well, that's that. I wish we had something to take home to Peggy; at least we can pull her some birch bark from the fallen tree at the chute; she loves it for making all sorts of things. Isn't this the neatest bandage you ever saw? Uncle Ben thinks I've a model head for bandaging. Why, I slipped on the rock and bumped my head just after you left, and I'm to be a lady of leisure all the way home just to reward me for my silliness."

The words were trivial enough, but in Christine's eyes was a wistful, beseeching look as if she were asking forgiveness.

Joyce felt bewildered. *She* to forgive Christine! What did Chris mean?

Then she shut her mind on all thinking, and drank the cup of hot tea Judith brought them.

It was while the boys were stowing the dunnage-bags into the canoes, and Judith and Nancy were making a comfortable place for the invalid in the red canoe that Christine managed to get in a private word with Joyce.

"Forgive me, Joy," she said, "I cannot forgive myself; I hate to think of how I thanked you — before —"

For a moment Joyce felt bewildered again, then she saw that Christine was realizing her, Joyce's remorse, and, in addition to penitence for her own thoughtless mockery, was accepting a share in the responsibility for the catastrophe.

"Don't ask *my* forgiveness," Joyce said; and then, almost fiercely, "Chris, don't you understand that I *pushed* the log, that I might have killed you?"

"Hush," said Christine quickly. "All right Judy, darlin', we're coming this very instant. Daddy, I don't need to be carried; just put your arm around me to steady me, and I'll put my dizzy old head on your shoulder — certainly I can keep quiet, Uncle Ben, if I want to

— very well, then, I shan't talk at all — I'll go to sleep."

It was with Drew that Joyce paddled home, Drew who declared that he felt too sleepy to talk, so, if she didn't mind, they'd paddle like Indians, and only grunt at intervals to show they were there.

The journey home was uneventful; Judith and Nancy, Jack and Tom, in the first two canoes, led the way; the red canoe and the Veery followed closely behind, and steady paddling and quick portaging brought them in sight of Boschink and Ken-jockety sooner than Joyce had thought possible.

Good-byes were said; Uncle Ben promised to see his patient next morning, and then the two canoes headed for Ken-jockety's wharf.

Loving eyes were evidently on the lookout, for Peggy and Dicky were soon seen dancing about on the wharf and holding up the lantern at various points.

"Lots of adventures, Mummy, dear," said Christine as she clambered out on to the wharf. "A bear's tracks, and a baby porcupine, and I bumped my head, only it's better, and a wonderful sunset, and Indians attacking us in the night — the thermos exploding. —"

"How did you hurt your head, darling?" said her mother going straight to the heart of the matter.

"Slipped on a nasty log, Mum, and my fault because —"

"It was *my* fault," said Joyce in a quiet voice. "I—"

"Not now, dear," said Mrs. Davidson. Her eyes sought her husband's.

"Ben says she's all right," he pronounced cheerfully. "She'll have to keep quiet for a while, however, which will be rather hard on such a flibbertigibbet; better put her to bed up here, Mother, where you can have an eye to her."

So it was decided. Peggy, highly delighted, came down to the chalet, and there was a great running to and fro, carrying bedclothes and nightgear, and trying to give a brief account of the trip, all at once. Obviously, it was no time for Joyce to explain matters to Mrs. Davidson.

She found her opportunity next morning, however. Peggy and Dicky were fishing off the end of the dock, Christine wrapped in a rug was lying comfortably asleep in the deck-chair, and Mrs. Davidson came down to the chalet with a dressing-gown which had been dropped on the rocks the night before, and had successfully eluded Peggy's search. She met Joyce halfway up to the bungalow and her mother-heart felt a pang at sight of the white young face, so strained and weary.

"May I speak to you, Aunt Fran?" said Joyce. "I have been waiting until you were free."

She turned and went back with Mrs. Davidson to the chalet.

"What does Uncle Ben say this morning?"

"He says Christine is a credit to him; you mustn't worry about her, dear; it was a nasty blow, but fortunately far enough from her temple. Christine says you are blaming yourself unduly. She heard you tell me it was your fault, and will not have it. She seems to have given you great provocation. She is grateful and I am, too, for your quick and generous plunge to save her."

"Don't," said Joyce, "don't say such things. I can't bear them. Aunt Fran, you don't know; I had lost my temper entirely; I might have killed her. You trusted her to me, and I pushed the log and — ran away — she might have died with no one there."

In spite of herself Mrs. Davidson shivered slightly, but she put her arm around Joyce and drew her down beside her.

"And I still trust you," she said confidently and reassuringly. "I believe that you are going to get the better of this quick temper. And, Joyce, remember what we talked of before; you do not need to fight alone. There is One more ready to help than you are to ask. 'God *is* a very present help.'"

Joyce considered this. No, in spite of the prayer which had risen almost spontaneously to her lips in her hour of need, this meant nothing to her. How *could* God help her? She looked puzzled and dissatisfied. Evidently Aunt Fran believed it to be true — but then, Aunt Fran was — religious.

"There may be an ugly scar on Christine's face, Aunt Fran," Joyce persisted.

"We hope not," was the quiet reply; "but if there were, Joyce" (the mother-lips trembled ever so slightly — Christine's dear face!) — "if there were, I should be *glad*, if it could help to vanquish forever this foe that so often overcomes you."

Joyce looked steadily into the beautiful serene eyes, and in a flash she understood. These were not mere words she had heard. This was *God* helping her — Drew, Christine, and Aunt Fran, forgiving, loving her; this was Love, full and free and generous; this was Truth, wide and deep and eternal; this was *God* helping her.

Mrs. Davidson, seeing the light on her face and in her eyes, kissed her lightly and went quietly away.

Joyce stood looking out to the far horizon. She began to see, as 'through a glass darkly,' that the chains of Pride which had bound her were indeed broken, and that in the light of the gracious Truth of Love, she was no longer captive, but free.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REGATTA

CHRISTINE had declared that she could keep quiet if she wanted to, but she found it very hard to 'want to' during the next few days.

For was not the regatta to be held on Saturday of the very next week? And if she herself were not going to take part, were not Peggy and Dicky and Drew and Judith and Charlotte and Hugh and Joyce?

Yes, Joyce! It had been hard for Joyce to consent to go into the races, with Christine only an onlooker, but Christine had been so shocked at the mere idea of her not taking part, so genuinely distressed, that Joyce gave in, and determined to do her best, if only to increase, by a little, the sum of Christine's happiness.

So her mornings were spent practicing for the war-canoe race with Alison and Judith and Nancy, for canoe doubles with Alison and with Hugh, and her afternoons, or as much of them as Aunt Frances would permit after such strenuous mornings, improving her diving under Christine's critical eye, or coaching Peggy in the gentle art of managing a row-boat.

Christine, whose bandages were to come off on the great day and be replaced by a "neat little, sweet little dressing," to quote Uncle Ben, consulted the barometer anxiously. It was almost time for another three days' blow: they hadn't had the one she had prophesied the week before, the weather had been too good to last; they must have a breeze; that went without saying; Comet, for instance, liked a nice stiff little breeze; but it mustn't be too rough; that would spoil the diving and swimming and canoeing.

Drew was so busy setting up buoys, measuring distances, consulting Captain Adam about the prizes, and doing the thousand and one things that some one — usually a very obliging nice some one — has to do, if a community event is to be a success, that he hardly had time to eat his meals. Dicky, who had entered for six different events "for boys, twelve and under," stayed in the water to the very last minute allowed him, and then retired to secluded spots and solemnly and earnestly performed spider-like evolutions with his arms and legs. He even asked Drew as a special favor to wake him early, so he could get in an extra practice; for was not a watch the first prize for the greatest number of points in his class, and was not Dicky's supreme ambition in life just at present to own a watch — a watch that would go? He had a watch. Oh, yes! It looked all right, but you had to wiggle yourself to keep it going. And that, in polite society, has its drawbacks.

Of course it was a fine day. Christine needn't have worried. One of Wahnanee's best — blue and golden and breezy, but not too breezy — warm, but not too warm — just perfection!

Breakfast received scant attention that morning: indeed, it was only by dire and terrible threats that Mrs. Davidson succeeded in getting Dicky and Peggy to take sufficient food to sustain them during a strenuous morning.

The Gray Goose came clucking across the bay before the breakfast was cleared away, and there was Aunt Margaret with a green umbrella big enough for her and Mrs. Davidson to sit under and watch the events comfortably, and there were Judith and Nancy in bathing-suits under their ulsters, and Uncle Ben in white flannels and his college blazer, carrying the little bag which contained Christine's "neat little, sweet little dressing."

Joyce hovered unobtrusively near while the doctor took off the bandage. "Bee-yewtiful," she heard him say. "Now you look at that, Frances — there won't be a sign of a scar below her hair; this little one will be quite hidden; that's — "

Joyce didn't wait to hear the rest; she didn't want any one to see the happy tears in her eyes.

"I shan't need the scar, Aunt Fran," she murmured to herself as she ran down to the chalet to change into her bathing-suit. "I'll *never* forget."

When the Goose and Sputter, each trailing her own canoes, reached the Big Dock, they found it already swarming with white-clad, happy-looking people, big and little — especially little!

"I can't help being surprised at the number of children, of people, for that matter, in Wahnanee," Nancy confided to Joyce. "The Bay seems so quiet at ordinary times; one wouldn't suspect that there were so many campers."

"Me, too," said Joyce. "I'm still meeting new people, though I've been here for six weeks. And they're all nice, that's the amazing thing. Isn't it the darling place?"

"Only one nicer," said Nancy, twinkling. "You must come down to Quebec before you make up your mind as to the nicest."

On the Big Dock was bewildering noise and confusion.

Judith and Christine were each trying to talk to two or three people at the same time; Hugh was buzzing about, a trail of laughter in his wake; Dicky and his special crowd were undertaking to show off before a group of small girls who regarded them with mild disdain; mothers were cautioning their offspring to be careful not to get overheated nor yet "underheated"; fathers were feeling themselves rather superfluous and envying the lads their overflowing good spirits and abounding health.

"Makes me feel Christmas Carol-y," declared Judith, who had just clambered up to the rock where her mother, Mrs. Davidson, and Christine were establishing themselves, to give the latter a hug and promise that the Gosling should certainly win the war-canoe race, and that the four boxes of candy, which were to go to the winners, should be deposited at Christine's fair feet.

The sheltered waters on each side of the rocky peninsula, from which jutted the Big Dock, had been selected as suitable for the swimming and diving tests. The children were to compete on the south side, while at the same time their bigger brothers and sisters were working off their events on the north. Deer Island gave a welcome shelter from the breeze which was freshening up very satisfactorily for the afternoon's sailing races.

On the rocks behind the dock were seated the highly interested (and highly prejudiced) spectators.

"This is going to be a terrible ordeal," said Dr. Benson solemnly to the laughing group of girls who were standing beside the big springboard ready for the Captain's whistle.

Uncle Ben was a general favorite; the fresh young faces in their gay-colored caps turned toward him, nodding and smiling like a bed of pansies in the spring sunshine.

"Last summer we were up here," he confided, "Judy wouldn't dive at all; she tried once or twice and hit the water — smack! She *says* she's a perfectly *beautiful* diver now, but I can't help being slightly nervous."

"Dad!" said the outraged Judith. "You *know* I'm *not* a perfectly beautiful —"

"That's what I am afraid of, my dear."

The whistle blew, Charlotte who had drawn the unlucky ticket with "I" printed on it, shed her coat, and, feeling that she was in the middle of one of those nightmares in which one finds one's self in a crowded street unsuitably clad in a nightgown, raised her arms, wished "to goodness" she hadn't bought a bathing-suit with such loud stripes on it, and then, splash! she was down under cover of the protecting water.

Then came II, III, IV, Judith's turn. She took up a good position and dived neatly and gracefully.

Uncle Ben didn't *look* as if he were ashamed.

Then Joyce came forward poised as if for flight and darted down and through the water like a swift arrow.

This was preliminary, although points were being industriously added up by Dr. Morton and the rest of the committee.

Now each competitor was to perform a dive of her own choosing in which grace would be the stressed point.

"I hate to call it 'The Swallow,'" said Charlotte, laughing good-naturedly at herself as she went forward the second time. "I'll be much more like a goose."

"Good old Charley," thought Joyce. "She knows she can't dive!"

Down she went, this time with much less splash.

There was a round of applause from the spectators.

"Lovely, Kate," murmured Judith, as Number III made a beautiful curve. "Just like a gull — that one! We're both 'Swans,' aren't we, Joy?"

Joyce nodded. Of *course* Judith would win! She did everything so well, thought Joyce despairingly. Well, Christine would be pleased, no matter who won, but, as Judy was pretty sure of the canoe singles, she *would* like to win this.

Judith stepped forward, poised, then dived.

The crowd on the dock and up on the rocks applauded vigorously. It was lost on Judith, now under water, but Dr. Benson treasured up the "lovely's," and "exquisite's," and "perfect poise and grace." He'd tell them over to Judy's mother that night. Who wouldn't be proud!

Joyce went toward the spring-board, but Dr. Morton stopped her for a moment while he removed a splinter from the board. She turned and waved her hand in the direction of the green umbrella. Christine waved her handkerchief vigorously.

Joyce felt a sudden glow. ("Haply I think on thee.") Judy had better look to her laurels.

She ran out to the end of the board, her cheeks rosed, her eyes sparkling; she poised carefully this time, remembering that she had been too quick before.

"A nymph," said one onlooker.

"A naiad, or a grace!" some one completed the line.

There was a storm of applause as she pulled herself up out of the water. Judith and Nancy were ready with her coat and congratulations, but Joyce's eyes flew to the hillside. Yes, there was Christine beaming and waving both her hands.

"You didn't grow swan's wings on purpose for the event, Joyce? I ask it in the spirit of the scientist," called Hugh from the canoe where he was helping Drew measure distances. "Kindly save your muscle and skill for the doubles. Ted's vainglorious and simply asking to be beaten; I tell him he and Charlotte may have weight and brute force, but — as for brains and beauty!"

"See that you don't talk, then," said Joyce serenely. "For if my brains are not given a fair chance, your beauty will be of very little use to us. The prize is a perfectly nice penknife; Drew told me, and I'm just crazy for a new penknife."

Laughter and chaffing, sunshine and pine-scented air, youth and joy of friendly rivalry! Oh, a *very* happy morning!

It was gone all too soon, and mothers were gathering together their scattered broods, and fathers were tooting the horns on the motor-boats as a "first call to luncheon," when Dr. Morton made use of his megaphone to implore these impatient ones to wait for just one more event before the noon recess, the ladies' war-canoe race.

There was a clapping of hands, apparently, to signify consent, and four canoes, each with four paddlers, lined up not far from the Big Dock.

The contestants were all in their bathing-suits, for the chances were that at least two, if not all, of the canoes, would tip before the short distance was covered; not, of course, if the paddlers kept a perfect rhythm, but then, with four in the canoe, that is not so easy as it sounds.

The big red canoe had been pressed into service, Judith in the stern, Nancy the lightweight in the bow, Joyce and Alison in the center; Charlotte and Kate Morton were in the next with Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Fuller, a visitor at the Dawsons'. Joyce did not know the others, but they all seemed to have one characteristic in common — they were having a very good time.

One of the boats was a little late; some one was changing into a bathing-suit just at the last moment, and the first three canoes, caught by the little breeze which was freshening considerably, bobbed restlessly about, and jockeyed again and again for the favorable inside position.

Christine up on the rocks adjusted the glasses, laughed and handed them to her mother.

"Do look, Mum. See their white teeth flashing in the sun! Don't they look *jolly!* There's a gray canoe — that's the Mortons' — and the varnished one, I don't know whose that is — and the Dawsons' green one — and our red one; the different colors will make the race easy to follow."

The whistle blew and Christine's face grew as tense as that of the most earnest paddler in the war-canoe.

Bang! went the gun, and sixteen paddles went into action.

One, two, one, two — Kate Morton's paddle struck Charlotte's, the rhythm was lost, the bow turned toward the red canoe — would they crash? No, Charlotte had swung her boat straight again, but she had lost her place, and had had to drop behind with the gray one.

One, two, one, two — the lithe young figures in the old red canoe were bending and swaying in a rhythm as beautiful as a lovely phrase of music. Christine's eyes shone. Of course they would win. Judy —

There was a shout of laughter, a *roar* of laughter, as in the twinkling of an eye, within only a few yards of victory, the red canoe turned suddenly over, and the four paddlers were in the water.

The girls came up laughing.

"Joy and I'll see to the canoe," said Judith, shaking the hair back from her eyes. "You make for the wharf, Nancy — no, *do* go on. Alison, you take her, leave me a paddle. You all right, Joy?"

Another shout, the gray was over too, and an easy victory left for the green.

It was rather a point of honor to right one's canoe and bring her back without any outside help. The two girls got their boat righted, but it shipped a great deal of water in the process, and would have to be tipped again, unless they could push it along and swim to the dock. In the excitement of watching the end of the race, the onlookers did not seem to be paying any attention to their efforts, and it was pretty heavy going. 'Twas not for nothing that the red canoe boasted of the nickname, "The Old Red Cow." So they were not at all sorry when Drew came alongside in Sputter, assured them that nobody could expect to manage the Red Cow when she was in such a state of mind — and told them to climb in and leave her to him.

Ken-jockety seemed to be carrying off her share of the honors according to accounts given at luncheon-time.

Peggy had won the swimming-race "for girls, nine and under," but had been hopelessly beaten at rowing by Margy and Nora, had, in fact, straggled in a *very* late sixth to the amusement of the judges who were starting another race. Dick had tied with Tip for first place in swimming, had second place in canoe singles, and was hoping — hoping largely and grandly

— for first place in diving. Joyce and Alison had won the doubles in the Veery after a hard battle, and the former had tied for second in the swimming. The results of the various diving contests were not yet known; but that Drew and Joyce were both to carry off first prizes was Christine's firm and unshakable opinion.

But for Joyce and for Drew, the real contest of the day was yet to begin. Comet *must* win the "Cock-o'-the-Walk" flag. The wind was right. "A pretty decent little breeze," Drew pronounced, as, after a hasty luncheon, they came down to the dock once more. Could one hope for more than that?

Comet and the red canoe were put on a tow behind the valiant little Sputter, and away went the whole party again.

"There are to be seven dinghies in the race, Drew says," Christine shouted in Joyce's ear as Sputter chugged her way across the bay, "but he's afraid of only three others — Hugh, and Charlotte, and Ted. However, Hugh's Gull is better in a heavier wind; this is just right for Comet; Charlotte will be apt to lose her head."

Professor and Mrs. Davidson, with Christine and the children, climbed up to their vantage-point on the rocks. Many of the other campers were there, too, but some were in motor-boats and meant to follow the race as closely as they could. Of course, those who stayed near the dock would see only the start and the end of the race.

The dinghies sailed out to the starting-buoy, looking like a flock of great white butterflies.

The next few minutes were apt to be trying ones, Drew had told Joyce. A great deal would depend on the position that they managed to obtain during the five minutes of jockeying after the "five-minute gun."

Joyce looked about. Yes, there were the Gull and the Flapper, and Ted's Swallow. *Eh bien!* What chance could *ces autres* have with a Comet!

Bang! went the "five-minute gun."

Joyce's eyes blazed with excitement, but her voice was perfectly cool as she told off the minutes from the stop-watch in her hand.

"Four."

"Three and a half."

"Three."

"Two and a half."

"Two."

"One and three quarters."

"One."

"One half."

Bang! They were off!

Up on the rocks Christine clasped her hands in ecstasy. Drew had managed so that he was closer to the wind than the others, and with this advantage they would *surely* lead around the second buoy, she thought.

Comet was leading, with the Gull and the Swallow close behind. So far so good. Joyce waved her hand consolingly at Hugh and Ted, and smiled triumphantly at Drew. He was worth looking at just then, his blue eyes shining with the joy of the game, his whole body alert, tense, alive, in every muscle and nerve.

"Ready about!" Comet headed for the second buoy, but she had lost a little ground on that second tack, and the Swallow, with a longer, swifter flight, was ahead of her, and — could it be true? — yes — had rounded the buoy before her.

Joyce smiled as brightly as ever, but she was glad Christine couldn't see. And the Gull was creeping up. Hugh had rounded the buoy very cleverly, one must admit that, but Comet kept her second place as they went around the third buoy.

They were out near the open now, and a problem was confronting Drew. Should he make for the open and get the full sweep of the breeze, or should he stick close to the shore and take a chance of getting an "offshore" wind? The three leading boats were so close together (Charlotte *had* evidently lost her head or something, for the Flapper was nowhere near them!) that his decision would probably make or mar the race as far as Comet was concerned.

Hugh and Ted evidently had no doubts — they headed for the open; but Drew decided on the other course. For one awful moment Joyce was sure that Drew had made a mistake; she saw the breeze in the outer bay filling out the sails, and the Gull and the Swallow racing along as she had hoped fervently that Comet would be doing. She looked at Drew and her loyalty reasserted itself. Drew must be right.

And this time, at any rate, he was. Suddenly the land breeze caught Comet's sail; she seemed almost pushed by an unseen force — and, as they had not so far to go as Hugh and Ted, Comet crossed the line a full ten yards ahead of the other two!

"Nice little race," said Drew in satisfied tones.

"Quite," replied Joyce; and she added demurely, "Perhaps some day you will take me for a really exciting race."

Drew looked slightly astonished, and Joyce had just time before they landed to say in scornful tones:

"Drew Davidson, it was thrilling, absolutely and perfectly thrilling, and you know it very well."

This was the last race of the day's sports, and people were already moving toward the grove where the prizes were to be distributed, but Christine and Judith and all their special friends were waiting until the sailors landed, and, although Joyce didn't need their congratulations to fill her cup of happiness to overflowing, still they were very pleasant to hear. Hugh and Ted and Drew plunged into a discussion of the possibilities of that third buoy in an offshore breeze, but Christine, who was longing to hold in her hands the coveted flag, would not let them linger.

"I'm almost sorry there is a prize even though it is the 'Cock-o'the-Walk' flag," said Joyce as they moved slowly toward the grove. "The race itself was such splendid sport."

Christine's eyes rounded with amazement.

"Not want the 'Cock-o'-the-Walk'!" she said. "Why, Joyce Virginia Hamilton!"

But Drew's glance showed that *he* understood and Joyce was quite content.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GIFT

"I WISH September days weren't so delicious," said Christine. "If the weather were disagreeable, I shouldn't object nearly so much to going back to the city. As it is, it gets worse every day and — "

The last words were lost in a series of sharp explosions from Sputter, who seemed to think that the holiday season had been quite long enough.

"Why do you bother any longer, Drew?" asked Joyce when she could be heard. "Let's take canoes and not try to go so far. It would be lovely up the Five-Mile Channel to-day."

The two girls were sunning themselves on the wharf while Drew worked at the engine.

"She's all right now," he said, straightening up and reaching for the red canoe's towline. "The stretches of cardinal flower up the river will be worth going to see. And this may be our last chance. I've got to get the boats put away for winter. Everything ready, Chris?"

"Not quite," said Christine. "I'll get the butter-pail now and call the children."

"Seems funny not to have Aunt Fran here to say good-bye to us," said Joyce a few minutes later as they cast off from the wharf. "They're having a lovely day to begin with, at all events."

"*Didn't* they look happy?" said Christine. "They wouldn't miss this trip by themselves for the world. I gave them all sorts of instructions about being careful and not being late coming home to-morrow, and I've promised that we'll be back by half-past six at the latest. Now, Dicky, if you're going in the canoe you've got to sit down properly. You might tip over and we mightn't know it because Sputter makes such a noise, and I don't want to have to think about a single thing."

"I guess I could make more noise than Sputter," declared Dicky, stretching himself out in the canoe. "Did you fasten the rope, Chris? P'r'aps I better do it again."

Christine shook her head and pointed to Drew for answer, and, after another snarl or two of anger, Sputter seemed to resign herself to another day's laborious chug-chugging and they were off.

As they entered the inner bay and headed toward the river, Christine, who was talking with Joyce, broke off suddenly to say to Drew: "Why couldn't we go by the outer channel and up the Musquash? There's no wind, and we've been promising Joyce to take her."

"No reason why we shouldn't if Joyce would like it," was Drew's prompt reply.

"I was just wishing we *were* going to a new place," confessed Joyce. "I can't get away from this desire to explore."

"Very well, Madam Ulysses," said Drew, altering his course, "the Musquash let it be. There's a little swamp up there I'd like to explore; Ted says he believes there's an eagle's nest in the neighborhood; we could have an early lunch and scout around a bit."

They steered for the open waters outside Wahnanee Bay and followed the Keewah's course toward the mouth of the Musquash River. The possessors of large motor-boats often made trips out to the open and up and down the coast to the various summer resorts, but the Davidsons had to choose their day for such trips very carefully, for, while Sputter was very useful in quiet waters, she was not heavy enough for the big waves so often encountered beyond the entrance to the bay.

This morning, however, the great stretches of turquoise-blue water lay gently heaving as if in a soft sleep. It was evidently just the day for the trip.

They crossed a wide open space and then followed a seemingly intricate course twisting and curving this way and that between the rocky islands.

It was nearly noon before they landed at the swampy stretch of river-bank that Drew wished to explore, and after a quickly disposed-of luncheon Drew and Dicky went after birds, and the girls for flowers or berries or anything interesting which they might find near at hand. They found several patches of cardinal flower blazing with almost incredibly pure color, and Peggy, who had been unusually silent, went into ecstasies over it and added a few lovely stalks to the bouquet of asters and goldenrod which she was taking home for her mother.

Something in the soft languorous quality of the sunshine seemed to have made them all a little quieter than usual. Joyce felt that she would be content just to sit and bask in the sun, and she and Christine and Peggy followed the boys rather slowly.

It was a lazy, uneventful afternoon and, when they finally got into the boats and turned homeward again, Dicky complained loudly that they hadn't seen an eagle or anything.

"Don't forget that lovely scarlet maple-tree," began Christine reproachfully, and just at that moment they had their first thrill that day.

The boat had drifted a few yards downstream while Drew did something to the engine and Christine's voice had evidently sounded louder than she realized, for, with a sudden whirring of many wings and much squawking and screeching, a flock of blue jays rose from a thicket of young trees where they had been feeding.

"Where's that camera?" demanded Dicky. "There must be a thousand of 'em!"

"About a hundred, at all events," said Drew. "Biggest crowd I've seen. I wonder what they are finding to eat in there?"

"Oh, aren't they beautiful!" said Christine. "Do look at them flashing out from the leaves."

"And listen to their sweet music," teased Drew, beginning to crank Sputter. "Who's got the time? Quarter to six! I'd no idea it was so late. And it's getting a bit breezy."

"I wonder if Dad and Mum have settled on a camping-place for the night," said Christine as they neared the mouth of the river. "Don't you think it's a lovely idea for them to have a little honeymoon trip every year? I'm going to — why did you *ever! Look* at that wind, and up the river you wouldn't know there was such a thing!"

Drew wasn't looking at the wind, but he was looking at the waves which the wind was rolling along. Joyce saw his lips tighten as he took in the situation. His orders came clearly and decisively.

"Dicky, bring the paddles and come in here: better put on your coats, girls: we're going to get splashed a bit, I'm afraid; the wind is northwest. Now watch for reefs, Dick; don't take your eyes off the water. I've got to change the course."

Dicky, nothing loath, climbed over to the bow where he curled up like a friendly sharp-eyed brownie ready by a wave of his hand to right or left to steer their course.

Drew tightened a screw, dropped in a little more oil, and listened. He looked relieved: Sputter was running better than she'd been doing all week.

"I can't believe that only an hour ago we didn't know that the wind was blowing at all," said Joyce, looking out over the bay where the whitecaps were racing along. "I never saw such a change in such a short time; think how still and quiet the water was in here when we came down."

"We ought to have remembered that it nearly always gets rough in the afternoon at this time of year," said Christine, a little soberly. "However, as Drew said, he can pretty nearly find his way blindfolded through these channels."

Just then Dicky's hand shot out, Drew turned sharply to the left, a big wave rolled past them, and Joyce, unafraid as she was, could scarcely repress a shudder when she saw the long jagged reef they had missed by inches only.

"There's one good thing," said Peggy, shaking the water from her coat — for the big wave had given them a good-sized splash in passing — "Mother isn't sitting at home looking for us."

Joyce snuggled Peggy a little closer; what a lamb she was!

"There are lots of good things, honey," she said, "and you're one of them. Tell me what you've been thinking about all day; have you made up a new story?"

"Not really new," said Peggy shyly. "I was just adding new pieces to the old ones; I wondered if 'Alice' would like this country as much as she liked the 'Looking-Glass Country.' Do you think she could have interesting adventures here?"

"Surely," said Joyce. "Suppose you make up one adventure, and I'll make another; then we'll compare them when we get home."

They had to cross a rather long open stretch of water soon after they turned north; the waves were gathering in volume every minute; Dicky was given one of the waterproof coats, the other was put over the engine; Sputter was doing her valiant best, but the smooth "chug-chug" which had delighted Drew's ears a short while before was jerky now as if the stanch old boat were losing her breath, and, although she rode the big green rollers as gallantly as ever, Drew looked anxious.

"This isn't the way we came, is it?" Joyce asked Christine as they bailed out the water.

"No," said Christine. "Drew's got to head into the waves. I don't recognize this — "

She had raised her voice because of the noise of wind and engine, and suddenly it seemed that she was shouting.

Sputter had stopped.

Christine dropped her tin and seized a paddle; Joyce did not need to be told to get the other one. It was all the two of them could do to keep the bow pointed straight.

Drew bent over the engine, gave her some oil, turned on the gas, cranked vigorously, and then stifled a quick exclamation of dismay.

"What is it?" asked Christine.

"Connecting-rod broken," said Drew, "though how, beats me! We'll have to make for land and go home in the canoe. Give me your paddle, Joy, you and Chris can take turns. Dicky, steer for the south shore, there, the nearest island."

It was slow going, and Sputter seemed impossibly heavy. But little by little, almost inch by inch it seemed to Joyce, they crept along toward the rocky shore.

And then the unbelievable happened.

One moment they were pushing through the water with all their strength, and the next, their paddles struck rock and Sputter, wavering uncertainly for a moment, lay over on her side.

What followed would always remain as a

nightmare memory to Joyce: Christine's cry of "Dicky! Dicky!" Drew's quick jump overboard; the horrible suspense until the two faces reappeared; their efforts to right Sputter as they all stood on the slippery reef unable to see how secure was their foothold; those last few hundred yards of paddling against time — for the water was now rushing in through a big ugly gash in Sputter's side; Drew's effort to save the canoe as a wave smashed them up against the rocks; his white face and helpless arm as another angry wave completed the breaking of the canoe; their united and almost superhuman efforts to drag Sputter a little way up on a shelving rock.

The sky, had they had time to look at it, had been offering them a magnificent sunset of piled-up masses of tawny cloud dyed purple and rose and shot with flaming bars of golden light, but, as they gave Sputter a final pull and looked about them to take stock of their surroundings, the last glowing bars of color were fading, and it was evident that the early autumn darkness would soon be upon them.

"Hurrah, we're going to camp out for the night, too!" said irrepressible Dicky. "Can't let Dad and Mum have *all* the fun."

"I'm glad the basket and the big coat are in the bow," said Christine practically. "Let's get them out. Dicky, you climb over."

"Drew, you've hurt yourself!" said Joyce as she saw him painfully try to lift his arm.

"Drew!" Christine was beside him in an instant. "Is it broken?"

"No, I don't think so," said Drew, the beads of perspiration standing on his forehead as he tried again. "It would hurt more; I guess it's just strained; that last wave was positively vicious; it cracked the poor Red Cow and me at the same time."

Drew spoke lightly, but Joyce felt an undercurrent of anxiety in his tones. She herself had no room for fears so glad was she to feel solid earth, or rock, under her feet again. Those five minutes out on the slippery reef were not pleasant to think upon.

"How would it be if you and Peggy would find the most sheltered spot for our camp and lay a fire?" said Drew. "Chris and I will take care of whatever Dicky salvages from the wreck, and tie up the canoe."

"Right-o," said Joyce cheerfully. "Come on, we'll be explorers, Peggy. We'll run so as to let the wind dry our clothes."

When they returned some ten minutes later, after making a tour of the island, to report that there was a splendid place for a camp just a little south of where they had landed, they found that Christine had put Drew's arm in a sling and helped Dicky make Sputter fast to a big boulder.

Dicky was enjoying himself thoroughly. He was frankly sorry that he and Drew were not alone so that they could be Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday, but cheered up again when Christine reminded him of the "Swiss Family Robinson."

"They got more out of their wreck than we have," he announced just as Joyce and Peggy returned with their news. "It's a good thing we didn't finish those sandwiches at luncheon. I'm starving to death."

"So am I," said Joyce. "I could eat everything in sight —"

She stopped abruptly. Something in the look that passed between Drew and Christine told her. This was Drew's anxiety. Supposing it were still rough to-morrow and no one passed by?

"Well, you're not going to eat everything in sight," Christine was saying firmly. "You had a perfectly enormous luncheon and we'll want these sandwiches for breakfast. Let's get a fire going. Won't it be nice to snuggle down and go to sleep."

"Good work," said Drew as he surveyed the sheltered spot Joyce and Peggy had chosen and inspected the fire laid in a crevice of the rock. "Couldn't have built a better one myself. You shall have the honor of striking one of our precious matches. Hold it low down here. This is really a shipwreck *de luxe*, for we've matches — ten, no, eleven of 'em — and plenty of firewood."

"What's the island like, Joy?" asked Christine, holding her hands to the warmth.

"Very flat," said Joyce, "and no very high trees; these pines are the biggest; the north shore is absolutely bare as far as we could see."

The wind was stronger than ever; the tiny fire had to be well sheltered, but no one confessed to being cold, and indeed the exertions of the last hour and the cup of cocoa which Christine had made them induced a pleasant drowsiness.

In another larger crevice Drew and Dicky put a thick carpet of balsam twigs and pine-needles for the girls' bed, and found shelter for themselves behind the roots of the pine-tree.

Joyce spoke truly when she declared that she was quite comfy and snug. The fissure in the rock was two or three feet deep, about as wide across and seven or eight feet long. The girls snuggled down under their coats, and in spite of the strangeness of their surroundings were soon sound asleep.

Drew was not so lucky: his arm and shoulder were too painful to make sleep possible, and his thoughts were not pleasant companions.

Why had he been fool enough to change from their original plan? If no one passed tomorrow — and it was more than likely that this was the beginning of a September three days' blow — his father and mother would have the agony of coming home to an empty house; they'd send out a search-party, but up the Wahnanee River toward Little Gull Lake, since that was where he had arranged to go. And he and Christine shared the disquieting knowledge that, after a breakfast in the morning of a cup of cocoa and a sandwich, there was no more food. If only he hadn't hurt his shoulder so that he might swim to the mainland, or if only that last wave had spared the canoe.

Poor Drew, feverish with pain, tossed and turned all night long, making plans and rejecting them, blaming himself, and trying to be philosophical.

He fell sound asleep at last when the pale morning light was breaking through the veils of cloud in the east, and did not waken until he heard Dicky say, in his piercing whisper, "Yes, just as blowy as ever. Crickey, I'm hungry! Don't let's wait for Drew; he's sleeping like a log."

Drew sat up quickly, though the pain in his stiff shoulder was agonizing. Was Dicky right? Was it really as stormy as ever?

"Not quite so rough this morning, I think," said Christine cheerfully. "Did you have a good sleep? You poor boy, that arm must be dreadfully sore!"

And Christine, who welcomed any mischance which gave her an opportunity to pet and mother those she loved, was down on her knees in a moment beside him, holding his shoulder and helping him adjust the sling.

"Never mind my old arm," said Drew. "How's the wind?"

"A little more westerly," said Christine, "and fortunately for us, for Sputter is wedged in more safely than ever. We'll have breakfast ready in five minutes. Joyce is building another little fire — I don't think she quite realizes — but perhaps she does — she and the children are playing a mixture of 'Alice in Wonderland' and 'Swiss Family Robinson.' If only Dad and Mum knew that we were safe!"

Christine turned away quickly and went back to the others. She didn't dare think about that return to an empty home. Surely the wind would go down!

"Just a cup of cocoa for me, please," said Joyce as Christine passed the sandwich box. "I'm not very hungry this morning."

"Nor me," said Drew. "And cocoa is so nourishing."

"We'll each have half a sandwich," said Christine firmly. "It may be late before we get home."

"It's a good thing we have the cocoa," said Joyce, just for something to say, something to keep their minds away from the fact that it might be very late, indeed, before they got home.

"And it's another good thing," said Peggy slyly imitating Joyce's remark of the day before, "that Mummy and Daddy will be late, too: they can't paddle in this storm, can they? So nobody will know we are away."

"Clever child," said Joyce. "I hadn't thought of that. Judy, of course, might run over to see how we got on yesterday, but then she might think that Uncle Graeme and Aunt Fran had relented from their stern resolve not to take any of their children with them and had taken us all. I wonder if —"

Joyce looked thoughtful.

"Come on, Dicky," said Drew suddenly; "let's find the highest tree and put up a signal. Keep the fire going, Chris, and we'll put on some green wood to make a good smoke. If only this pesky wind would let it have a fair show."

It was a long day.

The wind blew steadily. The big green white-capped waves raced by the island. Joyce grew dizzy watching them. One is apt to grow dizzy on an empty stomach.

A thorough search for berries had resulted in the finding of two or three stunted thimbleberry vines which yielded a handful of rather dry fruit.

The berries and one slice of bread and butter divided into five pieces had formed the foundation for a tea-party at which Drew had distinguished himself as the "Mad Hatter," and Peggy had been enthroned as "Alice" at the head of the table.

Joyce was relieved to hear Peggy laughing so merrily at "Twinkle, twinkle, little bat," for she had upset them all by bursting into tears when she found that Christine was dividing that last slice of bread between the two children.

"As if I were a baby," sobbed Peggy. "Can't I bear being hungry as well as you can? I won't eat *any* of it."

Peace was restored only on a promise of equal division being made. And Peggy had made good. She laughed and joked with the "March Hare" and the "Mad Hatter" and drank her thin cocoa — one teaspoonful for five cups is not *very* interesting — with great gusto.

Drew's arm was not so painful as it had been, but still was very stiff and sore. He had lit a fire on the east shore, but the wind was still too strong for it; he had little hope that their signal on the scrubby pine would be seen; he dared not think of to-morrow: if it were July or August he might count on a boat passing, but September was a different matter; many people had closed their camps; and they were off the regular channel; he didn't even know exactly where they were; he thought Nelson's Bay was behind the next island, though he couldn't be sure.

They snuggled down again into the friendly crevice when darkness came and assured each other that they were going to have another long sleep. But sleep did not come so easily this second night. Hunger is not a sedative, and they were all uncomfortably hungry. There were little restless turnings, stealthy stretching of tired, cramped limbs, and miserable moments of self-reproach for Christine and Drew.

Next morning the sun was shining when they wakened, but the wind still blew. This second day was a repetition of the previous one except that they had no food at all — nothing but water and a couple of lumps of sugar.

Drew spent his time putting up another signal, climbing the highest tree to search the channels for signs of a boat, and wandering restlessly up and down the island. Christine and he had several long talks together. Joyce felt that they were sharing some confidence or making some plan to which they did not wish to admit her, so she devoted herself to trying to make Dicky and Peggy happy. And any one who knew Joyce would be certain of her success. Peggy's laugh rang out again and again, and Dicky seemed to be happily busy over something that Joyce was superintending. No one confessed to the gnawing pain which was tormenting them all. The wind was keen and their appetites healthily insistent.

Peggy fell into a feverish sleep in the afternoon and woke crying bitterly. She buried her face on Joyce's shoulder and made heroic efforts to check her sobs. "It's not because I'm hungry," she managed to say, "but — I'm sorry for Mummy — she'll be looking for us now."

Tears shone in Joyce's eyes as she patted Peggy's shoulder and talked about the raft they were going to make in the morning.

"We'll paddle across to that big island there and from there to the mainland; then we'll walk across to Wahnanee; I heard Drew say he didn't think we were more than three miles away from the Bay; probably we'll land at the Huntleys'. *Won't* Nora be surprised to see us! We'll seize their motor-boat and fly, just fly, to Ken-jockety."

Peggy gave a shaky little laugh.

"It's a pity they haven't an aeroplane," she said, "like Nancy's brother has — then we *could* fly — Nancy's brother said if he ever came near here, even as near as Parry Sound, he'd take Judy and me up in the air with him."

"Huh! You'd be scared, you would," said Dicky who had joined them. "Girls are always scared when they go up. I wouldn't be. I'm going to be a flying fire-ranger like Jock Nairn, and drop down bombs on the fires from my aeroplane. I'll go round the world too."

Joyce left them talking about future trips to China and India and went to meet Christine, who had been talking to Drew at the shore.

There was such anxiety in Christine's eyes that Joyce stopped her and said simply, "Don't tell me if you'd rather not, Chris, but I can see you are worrying about something, and if it would help you to share it with me —"

"It's Drew," said Christine with lips that trembled in spite of her efforts. "He says that he's going to swim across to-morrow, no matter how rough it is — he won't let me try — and my head *does* get dizzy, I know — and, besides, either Dicky or I would probably get lost.

Drew has a pretty good idea where we are, but you know there are so few landmarks to go by and so many swamps and bogs to go around, it's awfully easy to get lost. Joyce, he mustn't go. He couldn't swim all that way with a sprained shoulder, and he's weak, too, from pain and sleeplessness."

"Didn't I hear you speak of a raft?" asked Joyce, patting Christine's head which like Peggy's had sought comfort on her shoulder.

"He thought he might patch up something," said Christine in muffled tones, "but the tools are all gone and neither of the boats can be used."

"He'll think of something in the morning. Night's a bad time for plans. I believe we'll get across in *something* in the morning. Perhaps we could hang on to the canoe and take turns pushing it along. I'll go down and propound my scheme. Don't you think we might have a drink of hot water with one of your precious lumps of sugar and some wintergreen leaves brewed in it?"

Christine raised her head and wiped away her tears. Here was something to *do*.

"You're a brick, Joy," she said — "no, a rock — like a big shelter. Do talk to Drew, won't you? He needs to be comforted — I don't know what we would have done without you."

Joyce went on with a happy feeling warming her heart. A comfort — a shelter! That was worth while.

Drew was gazing moodily at the canoe which he had pulled up on the rocks, but he looked up with a smile as Joyce approached. It wasn't Drew's usual merry smile; there was something about it that sent a pang through Joyce's heart. Drew was, indeed, in need of comfort.

"Can we do something with the boats to-morrow?" she asked, going to the point at once. "Couldn't we use the canoe at all?"

"I'm afraid not," said Drew. "Perhaps we ought to have tried yesterday, but I hoped my arm would be better to-day. It is strained more than I thought at first. The canoe wouldn't be any help: it's a question of swimming to that island and from there to the mainland. I might let Dicky try if we knew how wide the stretch of water was on the other side, but we can't see, and how could I face Mother and Dad if —"

"What are the chances of a boat passing by here to-morrow?"

Drew hesitated, looked at Joyce whose eyes demanded the truth, and then turned again toward the water.

"Pretty slim," he said slowly as if the words hurt him. "We're off the track, you know, and they are hunting for us up the river by now. If I hadn't been a fool — Joy, there isn't anything I can say to tell you how I feel about letting you in for this."

"Don't try," said Joyce quickly. "I'll be furious with you if you do. Am I a baby? Can't I take my share of hard things? Will you do something for me? Will you persuade yourself that we'll find a way in the morning and go to sleep feeling *sure* of it? I feel quite certain myself that something is going to happen to-morrow. I've a plan, several plans — there's Chris calling us for our hot drink now."

"If your plans include swimming across to the island, I forbid it, *absolutely*, Joy: you might make it, but — you mightn't — and you'd almost certainly get lost. Cross out that plan, please, at once."

"Will you rest to-night as I've asked you, *please*, Drew?"

"Yes," said Drew, and he stumbled a little on the path as if he had suddenly relaxed and was faint and giddy. "I promise. Joy, you're — a — decent — sort — a — a — brick. I don't know what we'd have done without you — I haven't been blind —"

Joyce's cheeks and eyes glowed. She could have sung for sheer happiness. That was wonderfully worth while. It was nice to have people do things for one — comfort and help and protect — but wasn't it *splendid* to do it one's self! To think of being able to help Drew!

The morning and the evening were the second day.

No one slept much that night. Peggy was in a burning fever; they all felt nauseated and giddy, and the gnawing pain would not leave them.

As it grew light, Joyce, who had been lying awake thinking, raised herself cautiously and looked at Christine and Peggy. Yes, they were both asleep.

Peggy stirred, murmured something which Joyce could not hear, and turned over disclosing a tear-stained, flushed face. There were black rings under Christine's eyes and her face was drawn and white.

Very carefully Joyce climbed out of the crevice and went down to the water's edge. Her head felt light, a feeling of nausea swept over her as she walked, she bathed her face, got herself a drink, and felt better. She stood up again and tried to estimate the distance to the next island. Was it twice as far as that long swim she had taken to the Gull's Rock, or half as much again?

Then she smiled. "You know very well that we're going to try, Joyce Virginia Hamilton, right now before any one wakens — and we're glad, oh, we're *glad* to try. Isn't it a piece of luck that I've my carpentry pencil here?"

She produced a little flat pencil and looked about her for something on which to write. Her eye fell on the picnic-basket and she wrote along its handle.

> I'm going for help; *don't* follow me. I'm glad to try. My love to you all and to Aunt Fran. Don't be sorry.
>
> Joy

In the basket was a little tin in which were four precious lumps of sugar. Joyce looked at them, put on the cover, took it off again. She hated to do it, but, if she were to get help, she must have the stimulus which the sugar would give. Slowly she took out two of the lumps and then crept quietly down to the shore. She wanted badly to go back and take a good-bye look, but she daren't risk it. She ate her sugar slowly, savoring every grain while she walked to the north shore. Now for a plan of campaign. She had realized yesterday that she couldn't fight her way against the waves for the whole distance, but if she could go part way with the wind and then strike out when she got in the shelter of the island, there was a chance she could make it.

Yes, the wind was less violent and more westerly than yesterday. That would help.

She took off everything but her bloomers and middy, put her rubber shoes in her pockets and lay down to rest for a few moments.

She knew quite well that she was running a risk — two risks: her strength might give out before she reached the mainland, or she might succeed in battling a way to the mainland only to be lost in the endless maze of swamp and lake and forest.

She quite realized the dangers and the possibility that her sacrifice might be a vain one. And yet — yet — she was serenely happy.

A little longer she lay in the sun which was getting dangerously high — any moment Christine might waken to miss her — then she stood up again, waved her hand and blew a farewell kiss to the sleepers, sent up a wordless prayer for help, and pushed off into the water.

"Half an hour ought to do it, Joyce Virginia Hamilton," she said to herself, swimming slowly and easily. "Half an hour? That's nothing, nothing at all. Why, I could swim for hours in this beautiful soft warm water. Now, we'll swim for a while, and then, the very moment we're tired, we'll float, and then, when we're rested, we'll strike out again. I don't believe the waves will be nearly so big once we can get south of that rocky point — There, we're doing beautifully — Why, I actually thought we might be tired when we got as far as this. A few minutes more and then we'll float. Hurrah! What did I tell you? It's going to be much calmer — in there — Isn't sugar wonderful! — A good thing I read about that prisoner escaping from Germany and having nothing but sugar to eat — and he had to swim under fire — Now, then, Joyce Virginia, show what stuff you're made of!"

One, two; one, two; one, two; one, two.

She swam rhythmically, slowly, sparing herself every effort that she could, meeting the waves one at a time, triumphing over each one conquered, using her brain to outwit their sullen strength, changing from breast-stroke to the crawl, turning on her back and using her feet only, then back again to the first stroke. One, two; one, two; one, two.

"When we reach the island we'll have a nice rest,
When we reach the island we'll have a nice rest," —

she sang to herself, accenting the rhythm with slow, easy strokes.

The blood was pounding in her ears now. She had not met the last waves so buoyantly as she had met those first big battering breakers, and it was queer because these waves were not nearly so big and brutal — brutal, that was a good word for those big green white-capped fellows; these were gentle, easy, suppose she rested awhile. "Show what stuff you're made of — Come along over on your back — What did Dicky call this stroke? — Bless Dicky's heart, he's kept a stiff upper lip — 'When we reach the island we'll have a nice rest — When we reach the island we'll have a nice rest' — Now, then, breast stroke once more — Didn't I tell you it would be easier in here? — We're nearly there — Never mind the pounding; of course you're a little dizzy; easy now, one, two, one, two, we're almost there — Show what stuff —"

Pretty good stuff it must have been; for, although the last few hundred yards seemed miles and her ear-drums about to burst with the pounding blood, she struggled on and on, encouraging, cheering, reassuring herself, and climbing up at last on to the rocky shore, a veritable triumph of mind over body.

She lay on the beach in the warm sunshine, her breath coming at first in hard gasps, her limbs unutterably weary. Then she sat up and looked eagerly across the channel. No, she couldn't see the camp from here. She walked around to the west shore. Yes, there were the pines with the signal floating stiffly in the wind — S.O.S. it meant, Dicky had said — anybody would know it. She would have liked to wave to them, but there was no sign of life on the shore and perhaps it was better — they might try to follow if they saw her.

She wrung the water out of her clothes and lay face down on the warm rocks, the sweet sense of victory hardly won stealing through her veins. She slept, perhaps an hour or so, for when she woke the sun was high, and she jumped to her feet with an exclamation of dismay at the time she had wasted, and almost ran to the eastern shore to see what sort of channel she had here to cross. A thicket of scrub poplar blocked her view and then — hurrah! From the northeast one, two, three, little rocky islets broke the channel, and beyond that was the blessed mainland. No big brutal waves in here. And the wind? Why, the wind had gone.

With a smile Joyce was in again, swimming easily, buoyantly, climbing up on to the first island, resting a few minutes, then down again into the friendly little waves.

As she neared the shore she chuckled. "If I could send a radio to those blessed dears it would have to read something like this:"

In again, out again, off again,

The mainland!

Joy again!

Once more Joyce looked back, this time carefully. She couldn't be sure, but — yes — there was the tree — Now, what had Drew said? — due northeast he'd go — Very well, then due northeast she'd go — and she didn't need a compass out here on the coast-line, for the little pines, bent down before the great northwest gales, would be a guide.

It was hard going: every muscle in her tired body called out for rest; her head whirled; rocky slopes up which she would have run gayly and easily now loomed high as mountains; she kept a sharp lookout for berries, but found none; a long détour had to be made to avoid a deep bay; another, because of a swamp; she grew dizzier, hands and cheeks began to burn; she was horrified to find herself laughing and crying; she struggled on, but she now had no notion of the direction she was taking; she felt numb, light-headed; a searing pain racked her head; a wave of darkness fell upon her; she stumbled against a fallen pine-tree.

"Have a nice rest," she murmured. "When we reach the island, we'll have a nice rest — I can't fail — God won't let me fail — They're all so *splendid* — Give them back to Aunt Fran safe and sound —"

She woke with a start. What was that sound? There it was again — a buzzing — an enormous buzzing like that of a million bees. Where could they be? She tried to rise, to get under cover of the trees by the little lake. *Could* she cross that open space of rock to the lake? She must. She looked up as she tottered forward. She was too late. A great golden bee — a monstrous bee, blotting out the sun, the sky, was coming down, down. Darkness covered her.

The buzzing ceased. A man jumped from the aeroplane and ran toward her. Joyce opened her eyes and smiled.

"Are you the bee?" she asked. "Have you any berries? — I — I beg your pardon — what did I say?"

Darkness was coming again. She wanted to slip down into it quietly and rest, but a teasing little thought in her brain wouldn't let her.

Something hot trickled down her throat and stung her back to consciousness. Two faces were bending over her.

"Try again," a friendly voice was saying. "Where did you leave them? We ought to hurry."

The mists cleared.

"Why, it's Nancy's brother! Where? On an island — S.O.S. on the pine-tree — one island between us and the mainland — could you give them a message?"

The two bent forward eagerly to catch the whispered words:

"In again, out again, off again — Joy again

— Aunt Fran's joy, you know — when I give them back to her safe and sound."

Ten days later, the Davidsons, looking strangely unfamiliar in "town" clothes, were waiting on the Big Dock for the arrival of the Keewah.

Hugh and Noel, Charlotte and Alison, were there to say good-bye. Dr. and Mrs. Benson were staying another week, but Judith was to go down to Toronto to-day to be in time for the opening of York Hill.

Mrs. Davidson, a little tired after the strenuous work of closing Ken-jockety for the winter, sat quietly watching her children chatting and laughing with their friends. A very miracle of healing had been wrought during these last ten days of rest and quiet, for there was no trace, on the happy, youthful faces, of the fatigue and stress of the fateful first of September picnic which might have ended so tragically. About the mother's eyes, however, were little lines drawn there by the agony of that day of seemingly fruitless searching. Not yet could she forget.

Drew came out of the post-office with yesterday's mail. The lovely, tender, brooding mother-look was in her eyes as she watched him distributing the letters and papers. Drew, Christine, Dicky, Peggy, all of them, dearer than ever. And Joyce? The love-light in her eyes deepened as she looked. Joyce need never again be without mother-arms about her, mother-love brooding over her.

"From Nancy!" cried Judith pouncing on her letter and eagerly opening it.

Joyce turned over her letters: one from Markham & King — some legal paper to sign, she supposed; one from Cousin Edith; and, yes, one with a French stamp and her father's handwriting.

"Nancy is thrilled," announced Judith. "She's just had a letter from Jack describing how they made the landing on Jean Jacques's meadowland and were just in time to be able to join in the search; she thinks it was awfully clever of Tom to see Joy's white middy blouse and — Oh, Chris! Catherine is coming back next year! Oh, oh, I'm so glad —"

She broke off as Joyce uttered a little cry, and Drew, who had been going toward the luggage-shed, turned back quickly. Not bad news surely!

But Joyce's eyes were shining as she looked up for an instant and her voice trembled slightly with excitement as she read aloud from her father's letter:

> The paper in the long blue envelope which should arrive about the same time as this, if my plans have worked out properly, is the deed to Little Moon Island; for "the absentee landlord" is none other than your own father (no one regrets more than he the justice of the term "absentee"), and, as he does not believe any more than you do in "absentee landlords," he is transferring the said island, together with such duties and responsibilities as devolve upon the owner, such as a period of residence each year (when desired), to his dearly loved daughter, Joyce Virginia Hamilton.

"Joy!" cried Christine, throwing her arms about her friend, to the complete extinguishing of glowing cheeks and shining gray eyes.

"Christine!" said Joyce emerging, still radiant. "Summers at Wahnanee! One summer after another! And next door to you! Just a channel between us and Ken-jockety!"

"Good work," said Drew briefly, as his eyes met and held hers. But he meant a lot more. His father was right. Boys, like men, *are* dumb creatures.

THE END

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JANE'S ISLAND

By Marjorie Hill Allee

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